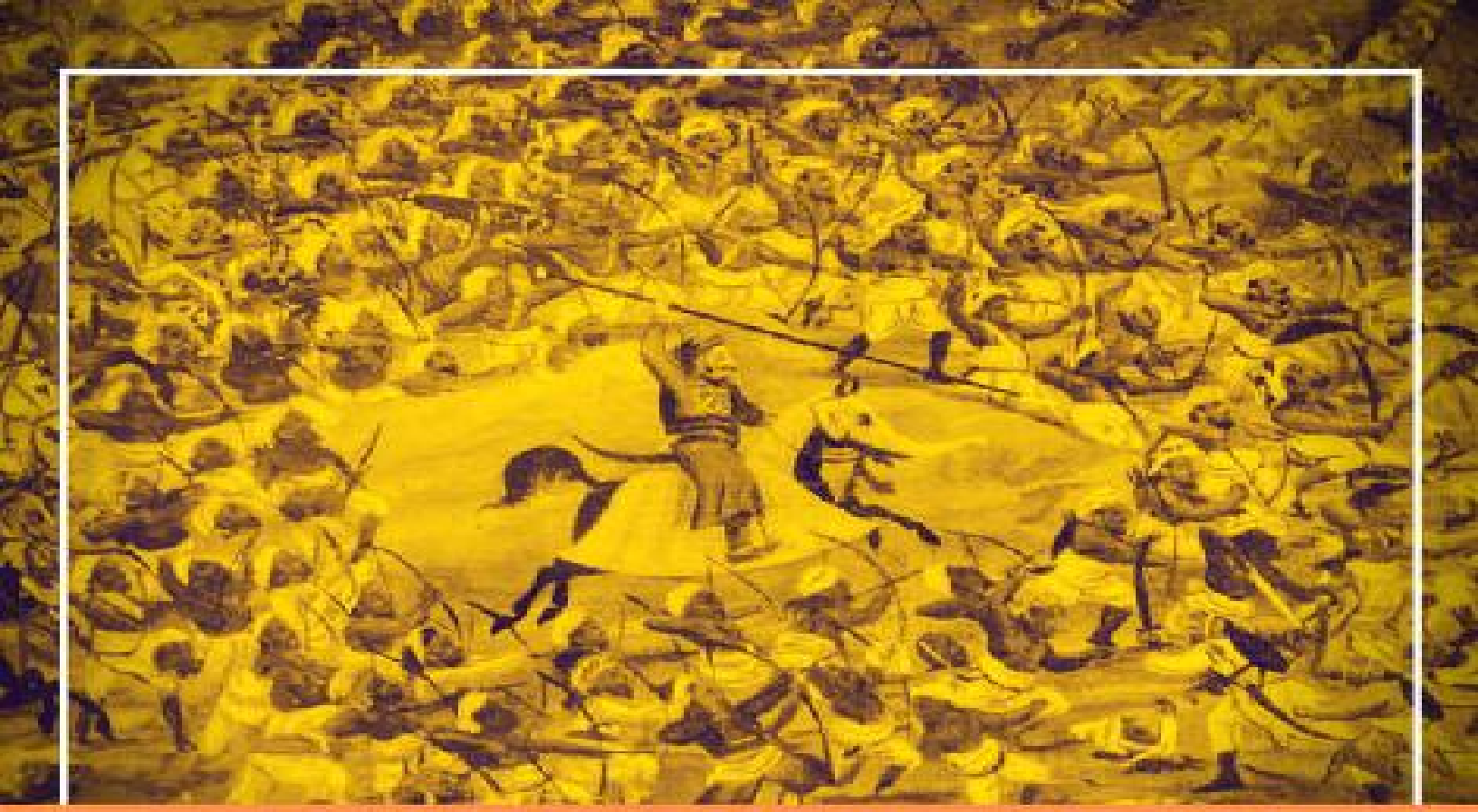

10 Lessons from Hindu History in 10 Episodes

TALES OF GRIT, HEROISM AND VALOUR

BY SANDEEP BALAKRISHNA

Sandeep Balakrishna

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Tales of Grit, Heroism and Valour

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Dedicated to the nameless warriors who throughout the ages fought for their ancient Dharma till the end.
It is because the blood they shed and the sacrifices they endured that India still retains her original name: Bharatavarsha

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Preface

This work is a collection of ten episodes and stories from the nearly inexhaustible mine called the history of India. They were first published in *The Dharma Dispatch* as magazine-style essays. Owing to the generous and substantial feedback and suggestions by well-wishers and readers alike, they have been compiled into the book you are now reading. These essays have been significantly expanded with additional information with references and notes at the end of each chapter.

The criteria for selecting only these ten episodes are rather straightforward. The first is the variety of the historical topics covered in these episodes, which becomes evident as you read. The second is to uncover and offer relatively obscure events not generally covered both in popular and public narratives about Indian history. The third is the insights and valuable lessons they offer Hindus as a civilisational people and India as a civilisational state.

Perhaps no other people have fought as hard and for so long and endured centuries of humiliation and tyranny under alien despotisms *and* finally emerged victorious as the Hindus. This among others is a fundamental reason why a thorough and truthful study and retelling of this history is needed. The study of Hindu history is also a study of values and inspiration and a profound spiritual yearning that subconsciously

continues to guide Hindus. It is also what makes India a unique and distinctive country which is not primarily defined by its politics but by its philosophy and spirituality. The essays in this work both tangentially and explicitly bring out these aspects.

Like my other books, *10 Lessons from Hindu History in 10 Episodes* is envisaged as a popular narrative without overlooking or taking liberties with historical accuracy. I hope you will find this book useful and informative and that it will kindle your interest in Indian history, which like the Indian Ocean at Kanyakumari, is vast, infinite and abundant with invaluable treasures.

Needless, any errors in the book are mine alone and I stand corrected in advance.

SANDEEP BALAKRISHNA

01 September 2020

1

The Verse that Heralded a Half Century of the Splendid Reign of Paramara Bhoja Raja

An inspiring and moving historical narrative about the 11th Century king, the immortal Paramara Bhoja

* * *

The Dawn of Civilisational Darkness

By the close of the tenth century, even as *Shakti Kavi* (Brawny Poet) Ranna was writing supercharged verses of brilliant Kannada poetry extolling his patron, the Western Chalukya King Tailapa II, classical Bharatavarsha was perched on the edge of implosion into irretrievable civilizational pieces. In the faraway impregnable *alcazar* at Ghazni, Mahmud had decided to cast his predatory eyes on mainland India. Blissfully unaware, Tailapaa II had at last, successfully vanquished the great Paramara King of Malwa, Munja (or Vakpati Munja) sometime in 994-95 CE. History is unclear on whether Munja died in battle or was executed by Tailapa II.

Indeed, this entire century was a fiery cauldron of extraordinary but heedless heroism, which witnessed the spectacular, self-inflicted death of three major Hindu dynasties. *vināśakāle viparītabuddhiḥ*. The flame burns the fiercest before turning into carbon. It was a century of vision-impaired Kshatra whose civilisational consequences Hindus are still suffering.

Yet, this all-round implosion didn’t occur only with the deaths of Munja or Tailapa II who savoured his great victory for barely two years.

Last Beacon of an Ancient Noble Tradition

Munja was succeeded in 1000 CE by his fabulously renowned nephew, the indomitable warrior, encyclopaedic scholar, and immortal poet Paramara Bhoja Raja. Perhaps Bhoja is comparable only to or rivals his illustrious Gupta predecessor, Chandragupta Vikramaditya, and much later, to Sri Krishnadevaraya. Among their multifaceted accomplishments, they upheld the fine and timeless Sanatana tradition that scholarship and learning presides over royalty.

The selfsame Mahmud of Ghazni, the Islamic barbarian, unscrupulous plunderer and prolific destroyer of Hindu temples had to cravenly sneak back to Ghazni owing to the sheer terror he felt at the mere news that Paramara Bhoja had decided to punish his fanatical misadventure at Somanatha. And as long as Bhoja was alive, Mahmud didn't attempt a similar escapade in the region. But in the long run, it appears that Mahmud's fanaticism took deeper and more enduring roots.

Bhoja’s Vagdevi Languishes Amid Sufi Dargahs

Paramara Bhoja’s beloved capital, Dhārānagara (today’s Dhar city in Madhya Pradesh), which once housed a grand Saraswati Temple is now bereft of Her. The *mūlamurti* of the temple was befittingly named Vāgdevī, the Goddess of Speech, Articulation and Learning. This Vāgdevī continues to languish as an “artifact” in the British Museum. The enormous Saraswati Temple complex also served as a mini-university until it was spotted by a pious *Sufi fakir* named Kamal Maulana, who stayed in Malwa for three decades, collected intelligence and faithfully transmitted it to the super-bigot Ala-ud-din Khalji. What happened to it after that is a gory story unnecessary to narrate here. Today, whatever remains of the Vāgdevī Temple is surrounded by four dargahs of Sufi *saints*, and Hindus are allowed to offer Puja only once a year, on Basant Panchami.

The modern-day version of Ala-ud-din Khalji named Digvijay Singh had completely banned Hindus as long as he was the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. This is the selfsame Bhojshala, today, more or less firmly in Muslim hands.

The Stirrings of an Intrigue

However, Bharatavarsha would've permanently lost Bhoja Raja when he was still a mere boy. Thanks to the selfsame Munja, his own uncle.

Bhoja's ascension to the throne of Dhārā, a historic event, was separated from his own death by a hair's breadth.

This essay narrates that story.

Munja was not an evil king by any standard as we shall see. He became a regent of the Malwa kingdom after the death of his brother, Sindhula or Sindhuraja, father of Paramara Bhoja. Soon, he assumed the full powers of a monarch even as the young lad Bhoja was piling up laurels at school for his sharp intelligence, felicity for learning, and the enormous promise he was showing as the future monarch.

Historical accounts vary on the succession of Munja as well. The 14th century Jain scholar and poet Merutunga in his acclaimed *Prabandha-Chintamani* says that Sindhula was Munja's younger brother. However, Padmagupta, the contemporary poet of both Munja and Sindhula says that Munja was the elder brother. But the most delightful, exalted and moving narrative is given by the great Sanskrit poet and writer Ballaladeva (or Ballalasena) in his 16th century classic, *Bhoja-Prabandha*, which continues to occupy a preeminent place in the world of Sanskrit literature. All three narratives (Padmagupta, Merutunga and Ballaladeva) present a uniform account of Bhoja Raja's ascension to the throne of Dhārānagara.

The Delightful Bhoja-Prabandha

The influence of *Bhoja-Prabandha* has endured till date. It is a brilliant and creative tribute to the geniuses of Sanskrit literature throughout the ages with Kalidasa as its literary emperor. From the depths of his vast and fertile creative imagination, Ballaladeva summons all these literary luminaries to the court of Paramara Bhoja and gives us charming anecdotes and magical stories woven in a warm, witty, and affectionate fashion. Indeed, most of the stories surrounding Kalidasa which have caught popular fancy and renown till today jump out of the pages of *Bhoja-Prabandha.*

An arid but objective historian might dismiss this immortal work as having no historical value, but it has a value far profounder than mere historical data and facts. A chief value of *Bhoja-Prabandha* is how its author uses his fond nostalgia for a bygone golden era to serve as hopeful inspiration for the dawn of similar greatness sometime in the unpredictable future. The Sanskrit scholar Dr. K.P.A. Menon captures this sentiment and places it in proper historical perspective:

> Royal patronage had stopped and staging of plays and such intellectual pastimes had become old history. **From the 12th century onwards, we do not find any original work of great merit coming from this region** and Sanskrit was getting much greater patronage in the southern states as compared to Northern India… The whole of Northern India had been under the rule of Muslim conquerors of Turkish, Afghan and Mongol origin… **One**

can only speculate on the magnitude of the loss suffered during this period when a foreign language like Persian became accepted as the official and court language.

There was enough reason for the poet to ruminate over the past. He decided to build a charming legend around a great monarch who had been eulogised all the time as a great patron of learning and generous bestower of gifts. Around him gathered all the poets and scholars cutting across time and space. It did not matter whether it was a poet belonging to the court of a Pallava or Gauda ruler nor did he hesitate about associating poets separated by a time gap of five of six centuries in common intellectual pursuits. It could not be that Ballala did not know that Bana Bhatta was a court poet of Harsha and Kalidasa must have flourished a few centuries earlier. Still, he decided to bring them together in the court of the great monarch King Bhoja of Dhara. *[Emphasis added]*

Indeed, as the title of the work makes it clear, *Bhoja-Prabandha* is the story of Paramara Bhoja, the monarch and hero of the work.

Bhoja-Prabandha opens with the dying Paramara monarch, Sindhuraja who is worried about succession. His son, the highly talented and prodigious Bhoja is just a lad aged about ten years. Sindhuraja is aware of the temptations of the royal throne but has no option but to entrust the kingdom to his brother, Munja.

Munja proves himself a worthy caretaker of Dhārā after Sindhula's death but an astrologer who arrives at his court poisons Munja's mind with his astonishing knowledge and a display of confident arrogance. The entire narrative in *Bhoja-Prabandha* is generously infused with extraordinary

gems of wisdom and timeless lessons on an impressive array of topics. Here is an example.

kaṇṭhasthā yā bhavedvidyā
sā prakāśyā sadā budhaiḥ |
yā gurau pustake vidyā
tayā mūḍhaḥ pratāryate ||
Knowledge that stays at the tip of one's tongue
Can always be used and expressed by the learned.
The fool is deceived by what needs reference
To a teacher or text for support ||

Indeed, there is little intrinsic usefulness in an education system that has no space for such immortal gems that teach *life* and confounds education with the mere acquisition of skills.

A Devastating Prediction

The poison seeps into Munja's innermost recesses when the astrologer reads out the young Bhoja's horoscope and proclaims:

> *"O King! Even Lord Brahma will be incapable of relating Bhoja's ascent to fortune… Still, I shall tell you something that my limited intellect can fathom."*

And then drops the devastating prediction:

> *For a full fifty years and five*
> *Seven months and three days*
> *Will Emperor Bhoja lord over the kingdom up to*
> *The Dakshinapatha (Southern India) and the Gauda (Bengal) country as well* ||

The colour drained from Munja's face. Outward, his expression remained stoic and he rewarded the astrologer and sent him away. Avarice, insecurity, and jealousy replaced Munja's genuine affection for his talented, promising young nephew. This is how *Bhoja-Prabandha* describes Munja's mental state and its behavioural manifestation.

> *avamānaṃ puraskṛtya mānam kṛtvā ca pṛṣṭhataḥ* |
> *svārtham samuddharetprājñaḥ*
> *svarthabhramṣo hi mūrkhatā* ||

Facing humiliations with seeming courage outwardly
Swallowing his sense of self-respect,
A pragmatic man achieves his selfish goal
It is foolish to ignore selfishness.

A Fatal Royal Order

The jealousy that consumed Munja quickly transformed into malice, which was invariably accompanied by its cousin, cruelty. He lost his appetite and sleep. Its logical outcome arrived as quickly. He summoned one of his trusted vassals, Vatsaraja, ruler of the Vanga region. When Vatsaraja met him in private, Munja issued this order: Take Bhoja to the Bhuvaneshwari forest during the first part (yāma) of the night, cut off his head and bring it to me directly to my private chamber. The appalled Vatsaraja tried to dissuade Munja using various methods of persuasion but Munja was adamant.

Eventually, when the mere boy Bhoja learns of the plot to assassinate him, he puts up a brave fight against Vatsaraja but it is a losing proposition. He is captured, hoisted into Vatsaraja's chariot and driven away to the shrine of Mahāmāyā in the Bhuvaneshwari forest.

Bhoja-Prabandha describes what happened next by drawing a truly evocative and tension-filled picture.

The evening fires had been lit. The sky was blanketed by the thick smoke of the fire. The fast-receding sun had already sunk into the Western Ocean, unwilling and afraid to watch the unspeakable sin that was about to be committed.

Unsheathing his sword, Vatsaraja told Bhoja in front of the Mahāmāyā temple:

"Beloved Prince, you are worshipped by all subjects in the kingdom. I'm merely a servant who is following the orders given by his king. And

the king is scared that you will inherit the kingdom as prophesised by the astrologer.”

The Great Spoiled God

When he heard this, the just fury that Bhoja had experienced till then morphed into wisdom far beyond his tender years. Facing certain death, Bhoja lapsed into contemplative silence for a few minutes and when he spoke, it was the voice of high philosophy that spoke:

ambhodhih sthalatām sthalam jaladhitām dhūlīlavah śailatāṃ
merurmrutkaṇatām trṇam kuliṣatām vajram tṛṇaprāyatāṃ |
vahnih śītalatām himam dahanatāmāyāti
yasyecchayālīlādurlalitādbhutavyasanine devāya tasmai namaḥ ||
Homage to that Great God who has become spoilt through flattery
And fond of miracles, by whose will the ocean transforms
Into a landmass and the land becomes an ocean as well,
A speck of dust becomes a mountain and Meru becomes a clump of earth.
Straw becomes as hard as thunderbolt and thunderbolt becomes straw,
Fire becomes cold and snowflakes become fiery.

And even as a stunned Vatsaraja heard these lines, the boy Bhoja plucked two large leaves from a banyan tree nearby. He folded one leaf making a cup out of it. Then he drew out a knife hidden in his dress, plunged it into his thigh and filled the banyan-leaf cup with his blood and handed it to Vatsaraja. On the other leaf, he inscribed an extraordinary verse addressed to his uncle, Munja, and gave it to Vatsaraja:

“This is my order to you as a Prince. Hand over this letter to the King.”

The profound verse is the climax of our essay.

As Vatsaraja took the letter in his hand, he spotted a strange, rare radiance of tranquility on the face of this glorious boy bravely facing the death standing before him. Overcome with remorse, Vatsaraja bowed down to Bhoja and decided to save this human incarnation of Dharma itself. There was simply no way he could kill this boy. He secretly transported Bhoja to the safety of a hideout and then proceeded to meet Munja.

Bhoja’s Profound Verse of Profound Grandeur

Vatsaraja walked towards Munja carrying a large, ornate tray. At its centre was the fake, severed head of Bhoja, which he presented to the king and said:

“Your order has been faithfully carried out.”

Munja had only question:

“Tell me, Vatsaraja, what did my son say before the sword sliced his head?”

In reply, Vatsaraja handed him the letter. With the aid of the lamp offered by his queen, Munja began to read:

māndhātā ca mahīpatih kṛtayugālamkārabhūto gatah
seturyena mahodadhau viracitah kvāsau daśāsyāmtakah |
anye cāpi yudhiṣṭhiraprabhṛtayo yātā divam bhūpate
naikenāpi samam gatā vasumatī muñja tvayā yāsyati ||
The great Emperor Māndhātā, who was the Jewel of the Krta Yuga is gone.
Where is the Vanquisher of Ravana who built a bridge over the Great Ocean?
Other world-emperors like Yudhisthira too, have gone to heaven,
With none of these great rulers their kingdoms went but
With you, Munja, your kingdom will surely accompany you!

When the eternal truth of this verse dawned on Munja, his knees wobbled, he became dizzy and then he fainted. After he came to his senses, he shrieked in disgust at the ghastly deed he had done and ultimately decided

to immolate himself. This was a sin no penance could ever expiate. His queen, ministers, advisors, and others in his close circle allowed him to vent. Finally, Vatsaraja told him that he had indeed saved Bhoja's life.

The story thus has a pleasant ending.

Paramara Bhoja is crowned the king of Dhārā in 1000 CE. His long and splendid reign till 1055 CE is arguably the last bright spot of Classical Bharatavarsha. It is deservedly praised as one of the finest hallmarks in the cultural history of India. It is said that no fool lived or was allowed to live in his kingdom. Even thieves, weavers, and other people we today classify as "backward" could compose brilliant verses extempore. An uncultured tongue and an unrefined quill was known by its absence in Bhoja's Dhārānagara.

On his part, Munja had distinguished himself as a great conqueror, superb administrator, prolific builder of temples, generous patron of learning, and a compassionate ruler who dug scores of lakes and tanks throughout his Empire. The Munja-Sagara lake (Munj Sagar) in Dhar till today stands testimony to this. The same applies to Munj-Talao in Mandu. The sweeping Ghats in Dharmapuri (in Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh), Maheshwar, Omkareshwar, and Ujjaini are all his bequeathals.

Epilogue

The loss of such remarkable stories counts as a civilisational and cultural loss. Telling and retelling such stories is how we transmit and preserve our unparalleled cultural values and our civilisational memory to succeeding generations. No amount of authentic dating and scientific historical debates about the Paramara period etc, will have quite the same impact as the profundity embedded in such stories. These debates and discussions deservedly have their place and a significance of their own but they don't form an essential part of our national life lived through the preservation of such historical consciousness. This is an intangible process and its value will be known only after it is lost.

Thus, our next visit to all these places will invisibly open a deeper, hidden vault within ourselves when we are armed with such stories of the *real* people that lived there. These stories immediately make Bhoja accessible to us when we set foot in Dhārānagara. This is history transformed to timelessness. It is nostalgia without melancholy.

Postscript

Words fail me when I attempt to express my deep gratitude to Shatavadhani Dr. Ganesh who introduced me to this extraordinary story.

* * *

2

Maharaja Jayapaladeva: The Last Frontier Hero of Bharatavarsha

A forgotten episode narrating the heroic and honourable martyrdom of Jayapaladeva, the last frontier Hindu hero who harassed Mahmud of Ghazni

* * *

In a sense, Bharatavarsha lost her independence the day one of her most sacred cities, the ancient Tirtha-Kshetra, Mulastāna brutally got the taste of what a pious Jihad looked like on the ground. Woe betide the city, town, village, and locality that undergoes a name change like how Mulastāna became Multan. Here is a glimpse of what happened to Mulastāna when Muhammad bin Qasim barged into its gates in the early part of the eighth century. This is what Al-Baladhuri, the Muslim chronicler writes.

Muhammad bin Qasim massacred the men capable of bearing arms, but the children were taken captive, as well as the Purohits of the temple, to the number of six thousand. The Musulmans found there much gold in a chamber ten cubits long by eight broad, and there was an aperture above, through which the gold was poured into the chamber. Hence they call Multan "the Frontier of the House of Gold," for farj means – "a frontier." The Budd (temple) of Multan received rich presents and offerings, and to it the people of Sind resorted as a place of pilgrimage. They circumambulated it, and shaved their heads and beards. They conceived that the image was that of the prophet Job—God's peace be on him!

The temple is question was the fabled Aditya Mandir that occupied the prime spot in the list of the most sacred Surya Kshetras in Bharatavarsha. The extraordinary concentration of wealth that Qasim found in just this temple dwarfed even his wildest imagination. Following the Quranic injunction of war and war spoils, he plundered its entire wealth and confiscated the substantial offerings that Hindu pilgrims made to this Deity on a daily basis, and usurped the temple management. From then on, all the offerings would be directly deposited to the Muslim ruler there, a practice followed till Jalam bin Shayban, the leader of the Ismaili-Shia Karmatians destroyed the grand temple, slaughtered the Brahmin priests en masse and converted it into a Jami Masjid in the mid tenth century.

Before Muhammad bin Qasim departed from Multan, he faithfully implemented another Islamic diktat related to conquests in Kaffir lands:

Wherever there is an ancient place or famous or famous town or city, mosques and pulpits should be erected there; and the Kutba should be read, and the coin struck in the name of the Caliph's government. And as you have accomplished so much with this army by your good fortune…be assured that to whatever place of the infidels you proceed it shall be conquered.

Muhammad bin Qasim erected a massive Jama Masjid and some minarets, thus planting the victorious flag of Islam in Multan. The original Mulastāna was largely a thing of the past. This ancient sacred Kshetra whose air was made mellifluous by the incessant chants of the Veda and other Sanatana hymns is today fabled for a proliferation of mosques, minarets, and a vast collection of Islamic structures. It is also home to the largest collection of Sufi shrines in a single place, a telling and living proof of the true nature of the "mysticism" of the Sufi tradition.

As a cruel footnote to the barbaric history of the tragedy the Aditya Mandir suffered, its ruins today lie next to the grave of the unvarnished Sunni bigot and Sufi poet, Bahauddin Zakariya. Here is how a Muslim describes the current state of the Aditya Temple.

The Sun Temple now only exists in ruins, overshadowed by the well-preserved Muslim sites located in its vicinity. Evidence of the presence of an ancient grand temple at this location now only exists in history books. A centuries-old place of worship, that has been praised in several historical narratives,1 now exists as a ghost of the past, overlooked and completely neglected by the

authorities and public alike. The site where the grand temple once existed now suffers from encroachment. It is put to use very rarely, for the purpose of pitching tents for the Muslim pilgrims that come to Multan for the Urs (death anniversary) of the saints in the surrounding shrines. Major portions of the temple have been demolished, the roof the temple has caved in, all the idols are gone, and nothing indicates presence of a majestic spiritual site that once existed here in all its glory. The centuries-old Sun Temple has been forever lost to posterity.

An Enduring Civilisational Impasse

However, Muhammad bin Qasim's destructive raid on Multan was a civilisational impasse as far as Sanatana Dharma was concerned, but an enduring one at that. The city was permanently transformed as a strong outpost of Islam on the frontiers of Bharatavarsha. The successive waves of Muslim invasions in the general region of both Punjab and Sindh were singularly ineffective and short-lived. The moment the Muslim hold slackened, the Hindu kings and chieftains either reconquered their previously-held territories or drove away the Muslim garrisons there or did both. Jayasimha (or Jaisimha), the indomitable son of the foolish and imprudent Raja Dahir (or Dahar) presents a great illustration of this historical fact. Under Muslim duress, he converted to Islam but when the Muslim control weaned, he beat them back and returned to his *Matru-Dharma*, his original Hindu fold.

For the next two and half centuries, this phenomenon would manifest itself like a recurring nightmare for the alien Muslim occupiers in the general region. In this period, a legion of extraordinary kings and doughty warriors including the Chalukyan "Avanijashraya" Pulikeshi, Yashovarman of Kanauj, Lalitaditya Muktapida of Kashmir, and the Pratihara Nagabhata harassed the "cow-eating Mlecchas" so horribly, so splendidly that

> *The Musulmans have retired from several parts of India and abandoned…their positions…The people of Hind returned to*

idolatry…and a place of refuge to which the Muslims might flee was not to be found. [al-Baladhuri]

Islamic Power Reaches its Nadir in Bharatavarsha

A careful reading of the non-Romila Thapar and non-Irfan Habib school of history reveals that these Hindu kings achieved their victories with breathtaking ease. Among them, the extent of the geography that each ruled was a fraction of the overall spread of Bharatavarsha's landmass. But their real achievement becomes immediately clear only by way of a contrast with the geopolitical situation of the period.

By the end of the eighth century, the might, prestige, and spread of Islam, which had reached untrammelled heights of triumph across a vast swathe that sliced across the Middle East, North Africa, Portugal, Spain and was knocking on the doors of France, had reached its nadir in Al-Hind. This abysmal fate suffered by Islam in India continued for nearly two more centuries. Arab travellers of the tenth century record how this nadir was symbolized by two tiny principalities: Multan and Mansurah. Multan itself was kept in Muslim hands with a simple, psychological trick: blackmail. The fearless Pratihara kings waged an unremitting war against the Arab ruler here to wrest the ancient, sacred city back into the Hindu fold. However, it was the selfsame and the much-reviled Aditya Budd, the Vigraha, that ironically saved the Arab ruler whose cowardly threat to the Pratiharas was simple: "go back or else I'll smash this idol to pieces!" Perhaps Allah's blessings were in short supply to this chieftain when compared to what he had bestowed upon Muhammad bin Qasim. Needless, the threat worked and Multan remained in Muslim hands. The interested reader is referred to Dr. S.L. Bhyrappa's first historical novel, *Saartha* for extraordinary insights on this topic. The late historian and scholar Dr. Ram

Gopal Misra makes the following blunt but accurate observation about this state of affairs at Multan:

> *Thus after three centuries of unremitting effort, we find the Arab dominion in India limited to the two petty states of Multan and Mansurah. And here, too, they could exist only after renouncing their iconoclastic zeal and utilising the idols for their own political ends. It is a very strange sight to see them seeking shelter behind the very budds, they came here to destroy.*

The Inimitable Conception and Spirit of Brahma-Kshatra

What does that tell us about how the Sanatana civilisation, culture, society and traditions were preserved? And how, even to this day, Hindus form the majority in Bharatavarsha? Clearly, it was not magic or voodoo that sustained it but something that was rooted in the Sanatana DNA: the superb, original and inimitable fusion of the evocative and inspiring spirit of Brahma (Spirituality) and Kshatra (Valour) that played out so gloriously on battlefield after battlefield for centuries on end until the barbaric sword of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's soul-snuffing and civilisation-shattering nonviolence killed it.

In practical terms, the chief reason for the repeated pounding that the Arab Muslim armies received in India owes to the incredibly sturdy and enduring foundations of the Sanatana-Dharmic state and military organisation and might of Hindu kingdoms. This well-oiled military organisational superstructure with its invisible and subterranean links of loyal obedience and nuanced coordination down to the last village headman who was responsible for maintaining his own army, was a direct inheritance from the time of Chandragupta Maurya. This brilliant, farsighted vision emanating from the genius of Chanakya-Kautilya was wisely and vigorously retained intact and expanded and greatly improved by the Gupta Empire. In turn, the successors of the Gupta Empire too, had preserved the same. This significant but overlooked fact of Indian history becomes clearer when we contrast it with most other nations of the period, which encountered the armies of Islam. It was the same story everywhere

from Damascus to Jerusalem to Egypt: large scale massacres of Christians and other non-Muslims, industrial scale plunder, mass conversions to Islam, monumental slave-taking, desecrations of their religious places, and enforcing the Zimmi (or Dhimmi) status upon non-Muslims whose numbers were too great to slaughter.

Bharatavarsha was the only exception.

The Vulnerable Remnants of the Kannauj Empire

However, by the end of the tenth century, the spirit pulsating behind and giving energy to this Brahma-Kshatra fusion was largely forgotten. The last vestiges of this Aryavarata Consciousness were slowly getting extinguished with the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas, and Palas busily trying to slash one another's throats. However, the downfall of the magnificent and overwhelming Empire of Kanauj ripped the protective military rug that had for over 150 years, safely ensconced the entire north-western region of Bharatavarsha. With that, the cover of what is known as the Hindu Shahi kings was fatally blown. The Hindu Shahi kings were the last, vulnerable remnants of the wreckage of the Kanauj Empire. The vast region including the Kabul Valley, Gandhara, Laghman, Kashmir, Sirhind, and Peshawar ruled by these kings was now ripe for the picking by the holy barbarians salivating at the borders. Roughly the size of three mid-sized European nations. It was the beginning of an irreversible civilisational rout that spread over several centuries.

Yet, to his everlasting credit, the last of the Hindu Shahi Kings ensured that he would proactively eject these barbarians from their lair at nearby Ghazni. He spent his entire life strategising, liaising, and when opportunity afforded itself, harassing these Mlecchas at the outskirts. Undaunted by repeated losses, he regrouped and re-attacked and left behind a great legacy of valour that outlasted him for about three generations.

His name was Parama Bhattaraka Maharajadhiraja Sri Jayapaladeva, the forgotten last frontier hero of Sanatana Bharatavarsha mentioned in

our deracinated history textbooks simply as “Jaipal.”

If there was one thing that the successive waves of alien Muslim invasions and the protracted regime of pious Islamic oppression could not snatch away from the Hindus, it was this: their unwavering faith, conviction and indomitable pride in the exalted nobility of their ancient, ancestral Sanatana Dharma. That vile task of inducing self-shame, the logical consequence of which is deracination was completed by two forces: (i) the British through “education” and (ii) Mohandas Gandhi through his death cult of non-violence and Satyagraha of which the worst and the most representative example is *Ishwar Allah tere naam.*

A Flash in the Pan

Muhammad bin Qasim's no-holds-barred and total war of annihilation introduced Raja Dahir and the frontier chiefs who protected India's north-western borders to a completely new form of warfare. But because it was a blip that largely faded away after he left, the rest of Bharatavarsha didn't pay serious heed to it to their everlasting civilisational detriment. Even the permanent loss of Mulasthana to Muslim hands didn't seem to matter in the larger and long-term scheme of things.

Which is what paved the way for the second and perhaps the deadliest precedent of all: the savage incursions of Mahmud of Ghazni who for the first time gave mainland Bharatavarsha a bloody and feral taste of what a full-blown Islamic invasion really meant for the Hindus. But the fact that nearly *three centuries* had elapsed between Qasim and Mahmud's invasion precisely proves a carefully-buried truth of history: the sheer grit, determination, courage, and solid defence that the Hindu kings and warriors put up for this extensive length of time safeguarding the already vulnerable frontiers and sustaining their ancient Dharma in such hostile climate and treacherous terrain.

Raja Dahir's son, Jaisimha presents a great example of this. The moment Muhammad bin Qasim departed from India, Jaisimha and all other major and minor Hindu rulers recaptured their former territories, threw off the Muslim yoke and those who had been forcibly converted to Islam, reconverted in an astonishingly quick span. Muhammad bin Qasim's fabled success in Sind was just the proverbial flash in the pan. It was as though the people of the territories he had conquered were waiting

for his departure. Jaisimha immediately reoccupied Brahmanabad and Alor and grew from strength to strength.

When Caliph Umar II noticed this, he sent a force which managed to subdue a few Hindu chiefs but the Caliph realised that there was no way he could impose a permanent occupation in these regions without substantial losses. So he offered a choice to leave them independent on the condition of accepting Islam. Some Hindu chiefs including Jaisimha agreed. But he quickly reverted to Hinduism under the Caliphate of Hisham and declared war against Junaid, the governor of Sind. Unfortunately, he lost and became Junaid's prisoner. The Hindu royal dynasty of Sind was permanently finished with Jaisimha as its last tragic hero who submitted to Islam as a matter of strategy but refused to succumb to the alien invader and extra-territorial imperialism till the very end.

For the next three centuries, we see all Hindu kings of varying strengths and powers following Jaisimha's fearless, never-say-die precedent.

The Hindu Side of the Historical Picture

Indeed, when we read the unending, sickening accounts of early medieval and medieval Muslim historians gloating about the predatory genocides, temple destructions, cow slaughter, gang rapes and genocide of Hindus, the inevitable picture we get is one of Hindu weakness and almost a propensity for inviting their own doom. To their eternal and unforgivable shame, legions of our eminent distorians have outdone and outshone these medieval Muslim historians in reinforcing this image of Hindu weakness. Quite naturally, these extraordinary savageries were attributed to the inevitable victory of Islam in this land of idolatory guided by the light of Allah and his favourite Prophet. Take these accounts written by the early medieval Muslim chronicler Al-Utbi, for example:

> *Amir Sabuktigin marched out towards Lamghan, which is a city celebrated for its great strength and abounding in wealth. He conquered it and set fire to the places in its vicinity which were inhabited by infidels, and demolishing the idol-temples, he established Islam in them. He marched and captured other cities and killed the polluted wretches, destroying the idolatrous and gratifying the Musulmans. After wounding and killing beyond all measure, his hands and those of his friends became cold in counting the value of the plundered property. On the completion of his conquest he returned and promulgated accounts of the victories obtained for Islam, and every one, great and small, concurred in rejoicing over this result and thanking God.*

The blood of the infidels flowed copiously and conversion was often the only way of survival.

The land had been saturated with the water of the sword and the vapours of infidelity (i.e. Hindus) had been dispersed.

However, these sordid episodes had a Hindu side to them, which very few books on Indian history have presented.

Here is the Hindu side.

Taken both individually and together, all these episodes present an extraordinary picture of unyielding heroism, indomitable valour, steely resistance, and death-defying fight for freedom. It is a picture of hundreds of thousands of battle-hardened men, ordinary villagers and even boys in their teens with one foot in the grave, gallantly charging at the temple-breaking and cow-slaughtering Mlecchas, willingly flinging themselves to death. Of hundreds of thousands of women and girls preferring a fiery death to dishonour and slavery. Of courageous Hindu parents who flung their kids into wells in order that they might not be subjected to being sold as slaves in the lucrative slave markets at such diverse places as Ghazni, Debal, Khurasan, Jeddah, Aden, Muscat, and Khartoum. Of newer and newer heroes emerging from the inspirational and courageous tales of these martyrs who continued their work of checking and resisting the surging tides of repeated Muslim invasions.

The fact that there is no *single* volume that comprehensively records this Hindu side of the historical picture is an ongoing crime against the heroic memory of the sacrifice and blood of the millions of these nameless lion-hearts but for whom large portions of undivided India would’ve already become akin to Egypt and Persia. Only two slim volumes have

shone light in this direction: *Indian Resistance to Early Muslim Invaders* by Dr. Ram Gopal Misra, and *Heroic Hindu Resistance to Muslim Invaders* by the intrepid Sita Ram Goel.

The Example of Somanatha

Nowhere is this unyielding spirit of resistance and bounce-back from defeat clearer than in the case of the glorious Somanatha Temple in Gujarat. The arch barbarian and unvarnished Islamic bigot, Mahmud of Ghazni definitely succeeded in leaving a pervasive and sweeping trail of destruction across northern and western India, and the tragic tale of Somanatha needs no repetition here. However, what happened *after* he destroyed Somanatha definitely needs mention. Mahmud had seriously underestimated the power of Hindu retribution. And so, when he decided to return to Ghazni with his massive plunder of Gujarat, he took a long, circuitous and difficult route because he was mortally scared of the powerful confederacy of Hindu kings under Paramara Bhoja baying for his blood. When he did reach Ghazni, it was at great cost: he had nearly lost his life in a skirmish in the last leg of his journey, had fallen ill many times, and most of the plunder was gone.

On the Hindu side, in just five years after Mahmud had departed, the Somanatha Temple was rebuilt on an even grander scale, a great metaphor in itself. Gujarat and Malwa had become even more powerful than before and earned prestige as a great centre of learning, literature and art.

The period beginning with the vicious invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni is a largely overlooked but crucial juncture in Indian history. I will venture to say that this period presents the most comprehensive picture of Bharatavarsha’s civilisation and culture which was poised on the anvil of its full contact with Islam.

The Spirited Defence of Jayapala Deva

This detailed backdrop was necessary to understand and appreciate the full extent of the singular contribution of the valorous defence that Parama Bhattaraka Maharajadhiraja Sri Jayapaladeva put up for years, blocking the inward march of Mahmud of Ghazni. But Jayapaladeva's resistance didn't begin with Mahmud of Ghazni. It had begun with his father, the slave-turned-ruler, Sabuktigin.

It is an extraordinary testimony to the gritty endurance of the Hindu Shahi Kings of northwestern India who were left orphaned after the decimation of the powerful empire of Kanauj but still successfully commanded a vast region that included the Kabul Valley, Gandhara, Laghman, Kashmir, Sirhind, and Peshawar, which was central to their dominions. In many ways, the condition of the Hindu Shahis of that period resembles that of modern-day Israel: surrounded on all sides by bloodthirsty religious imperialists just waiting for that one chance, one fatal slip. What kept them at bay were the extensive, horrific tales of the "terrible Hindu valour on the battlefield," which they dared not verify personally. Indeed, it was precisely this fabled Hindu valour that made major and minor Muslim chieftains in the general region of Khorasan and Transoxiana seek the safety of an alliance with these Hindu Shahis against their more barbaric Central Asian Turkic Muslim rivals.

However, without the all-encompassing civilisational vision of say, a *Chakravartin* or *Samrat*, these Hindu Shahi Kingdoms underwent cyclical political turbulences all of which led to their destined downfall.

Our story approximately begins at the end of the ninth century.

The Capture of Ghazni

In 870 CE, Yaqub bin Layth, a Turkish coppersmith, mercenary, and adventurer from Seistan who began his career as the chief of a band of brigands, quickly attracted the attention of the Abbasid Caliphate for his successful exploits against their sworn enemies, the Kharijites who had dared to rebel against the authority of the Caliphate. Layth rose through the ranks meteorically and became the founder of what came to be known as the (short-lived) Saffarid Dynasty. With an eye on Al-Hind, he sent a honeyed message to the ruler of Kabul and literally stabbed him the back with a lance when the two met. His Turkish army then invaded the Hindu kingdoms of Kabul and Zabul. The fate of Zabul was particularly gruesome: after its king was killed in the battle, its entire population was converted to Islam by force. However, this bloodbath was still a mere eclipse that had engulfed Kabul.

After the death of Yaqub Layth, the Hindu king Lalliya Shahi (or Kallar) who had shifted his capital to Udbhandapura returned and quickly reconquered Kabul. However, by then, Kabul had permanently lost its original Hindu character. The Arab traveler-geographer-chronicler Istakhri gives the following picture of Kabul in 921 CE.

> *Kábul has a castle celebrated for its strength, accessible only by one road. In it there are Musulmáns, and it has a town, in which are infidels from Hind.*

There was a lull of sorts for the next forty odd years. In 963 CE, with Ghazna (or Ghazni) in Eastern-Central Afghanistan as his base, Alp-Tigin ,

a Turkish slave commander of the Samanid dynasty succeeded in establishing an independent Muslim principality in Kabul. However, originally, it was his daring capture of Ghazni that truly changed the fortunes of mainland India for the worse.

Ghazni, meaning “jewel,” remains a highly strategic city located on a plateau and for thousands of years served as the main road connecting Kabul and southern Afghanistan, sandwiched between Kandhahar (or Gandhara) and Kabul. It was originally founded as a small market town and is perhaps one of the few antiquarian cities which had the misfortune of being kicked around like a football: from the Achaemenid king Cyrus II to Alexander to the Saffarids to the Ghaznavids to the Ghoris to the Mughals to Nadir Shah to the Durranis to the British and finally, to the Taliban. Perhaps no other ancient city has been repeatedly destroyed so spectacularly at sickening regularity. Till this day, Ghazni retains its preeminence as the key to the possession of Kabul.

Which is why Alp-Tigin’s capture of Ghazni received formal recognition from the Samanids. He was now the official governor of Ghazni, a title that would eventually pave the way for sweeping, barbaric and history-altering changes.

However, Alp-Tigin didn’t live long to savour the fruits of his conquest. He died just a few months later, in September 963 CE. His slave, son-in-law, and general, “beloved prince,” Abu Mansur Sabuktigin succeeded him in 977 CE after a period marked by weak successors and the misrule of Pirai, another slave of Alp-Tigin. Pirai was expelled from the governorship and Sabuktigin took his place in 977 CE. However, that was the beginning of his troubles.

To their everlasting credit, the Hindu Shahi kings in the Kabul Valley were not only alert to these rapid and far-reaching changes but saw the perfect opportunity to do two things: to recover their lost territories and permanently seal the frontiers of India against further Mleccha incursions.

The Hindus Fear not Death or Destruction

This heroic initiative was led from the front by the selfsame Parama Bhattaraka Maharajadhiraja Sri Jayapaladeva, the King of Udbhandapura. His first task was to prevent Sabuktigin from occupying Kabul. Jayapaladeva proactively went to work, first recruiting the disgraced Abu Ali Lawik, the last ruler of Zabul who had been so rudely ejected from Ghazni by Alp-Tigin. Then Jayapaladeva assembled a massive confederacy of troops from such diverse regions as Delhi, Ajmer, Kalinjar and Kanauj and attacked Sabuktigin in 986-7 right on his own turf in Ghazni. The pitched battle lasted several days and casualties were high on both sides. Then, weather played spoilsport and Jayapaladeva was forced to negotiate for peace. However, it wasn't an offer of surrender. In the letter to Sabuktigin, he thundered:

> *You know the nobleness of Hindus. They fear not death or destruction. In affairs of honour and fame we would place ourselves upon the fire like roast meat, and upon the dagger like the sunrays.*

And to reinforce this, he sent ambassadors with variations of the same message:

> *You know the customs of the Indian soldiers, particularly the Rajputs, who, if driven to desperation, murder their wives and children, set fire to their houses and property, let loose their hair,*

and rushing on the enemy, are heedless of death, in order to obtain revenge.

Sabuktigin accepted the peace offer, which was short-lived. Eventually, hostilities resumed and Jayapaladeva and his Hindu army was defeated and driven out of Kabul. The control of the entire region including the Kabul Valley and the Sindhu River passed into Muslim hands.

However, Jayapaladeva did not give up.

Elsewhere in mainland India, in 974 CE, the Rashtrakuta Empire had sputtered to death at the hands of its feudatory, the Chalukya King Taila II (or Tailapa II). In its wake, a long and bitter war broke out between Tailapa II and Paramara Munja, the ruler of Malwa. Munja was ultimately captured and killed sometime between 995-7 CE. Tailapa II lived for barely a year after that.

In precisely the same year, Sabuktigin died and Abu-l-Qasim Mahmud, his elder son, revolted against his younger brother Ismail who had been appointed as Sabuktigin's successor. After a long drawn battle , Mahmud broke open Ismail's ranks, captured him and threw him in prison in 998 CE.

And then, Mahmud of Ghazni turned his attention to India.

Jayapaladeva was among the first of his targets. As a teenager, Mahmud had fought against the ferocious armies of Jayapaladeva as a commander under his father, Sabuktigin. That experience would now prove valuable because among other things, he had learnt an important secret about the Hindus. In that battle, he had found that Hindu soldiers would recoil in disgust when foul and vile tactics were used on the

battlefield. For example, the use of faeces mixed in water and splashed liberally on the fighting Hindu warriors yielded a rich military harvest.

The Mortal Fear of Mahmud of Ghazni

Now as the unchallenged monarch at Ghazni, Mahmud would put all this knowledge to good use. This time, the theatre was at Purushapura or Peshawar, a mixed stage of ambition, retribution, fanaticism, destiny, and shortsightedness. As a seasoned military strategist, Mahmud did not underestimate the tenacity, will, grit, and fighting power of his old harasser, Jayapaladeva who was still around and in no mood to submit. Quite the contrary. He was determined to wipe out the alien Mlecchas from the region for good.

The sort of preparation that Mahmud made prior to attacking Jayapaladeva in itself is a superb proof to the kind of fear he had induced in the Mleccha.

Jayapaladeva, by all accounts, a minor ruler compared to the other superpowers in mainland India. A superb proof and a timeless tragedy.

Mahmud’s prestige and authority bestowed by the Caliphate’s recognition enabled him to command arms and armies at will. His vassals and subordinates and chieftains agreed to furnish 1,00,000 men whenever he wished. Then he convened a war council in which he declared that he sought Allah’s blessings to “raise the standard of Islam,” of widening its dominions in Hind and to bring the full light and the strength of justice of the Only True Faith in this land of darkness and injustice and infidelity. Writing in hindsight, the medieval Muslim chronicler, Abu’l-Husain Utbi is certainly convinced that Mahmud was indeed guided by the light of Allah who also bestowed dignity and gave him superb victories in Hind.

Mahmud pitched his tent outside the city of Jayapaladeva, “the enemy of Allah.” However, as we have seen, Jayapaladeva had already been proactive. This “villainous infidel” launched the offensive with a solid troop strength comprising 12,000 horsemen, 30,000 foot soldiers, and 300 elephants which met Mahmud’s 15,000 strong cavalry and a few hundred foot soldiers. However, weather played spoilsport once again, “amid the blackness of clouds.” Jayapaladeva decided to withdraw strategically. Besides, he had had previous experience of a battle with these Mlecchas—with a much younger Mahmud. He used the strategic withdrawal to buy time, to wait for more reinforcements and avoided direct conflict for days. However, banking on a shrewd and daring gamble, Mahmud attacked Jayapaladeva first, taking him by surprise. Confusion was the first response from Jayapala’s unprepared army led by the elephant force which formed the mainstay of his force. His soldiers suddenly jolted by this unexpected assault, began shooting arrows wildly, randomly, killing and wounding fellow soldiers. The military defence quickly turned to a chaotic melee. Disorder replaced discipline. The battle lasted just a few hours at the end of which Utbi gloats how the

> *Mussulmans defeated their obstinate opponents, and quickly put them to a complete rout. Noon had not arrived when they had wreaked their vengeance on the enemies of God, killing fifteen thousand of them, spreading them like a carpet over the ground, and making them food for beasts and birds of prey.*

Characteristically, Utbi the chronicler attributes Mahmud’s victory to the ignorance of the idol-worshipping infidels about the word of the Only True

God. He quotes the Quran in support of his claim: *Oftentimes a small army overcomes a large one by the order of God.*

Like Muhammed bin Qasim, but only with greater savagery, Mahmud of Ghazni gave "the enemy of God," Jayapaladeva, the firsthand experience of being a prisoner of an Islamic war. His children, grandchildren, relatives, nephews, generals, and the "chief men of his tribe" were bound with ropes and "carried before the Sultan, like as evildoers, on whose faces the fumes of infidelity are evident, who are covered with the vapours of misfortune, will be bound and carried to Hell."

And like Qasim, Mahmud next plundered Jayapala's dominion, stripping everyone including non-combatant citizens of pearls, shining gems, rubies, and gold. The additional booty he pillaged included the thousands of slaves, "beautiful men and women." Returning to his camp, Mahmud said a prayer of thanks to "Allah, the lord of the universe." Utbi gives the date of this "splendid and celebrated action" as 27 November 1001.

But an even worse fate awaited Jayapala.

As an *Asuravijayi*, this is what Mahmud did, described again in the glowing words of Utbi.

> *The Sultan directed that the polluted infidel Jaipal should be paraded about, so that his sons and chieftains might see him in that condition of shame, bonds, and disgrace and that the fear of Islam might fly abroad through the country of the infidels.*

Mahmud of Ghazni then freed Jayapala on the condition of receiving fifty elephants plus 2,00,000 dirhams till which time he had to leave his son and grandson as hostages. This is perhaps the first in an uncountable line of such hostage-taking of Hindu princes, an act which the British reciprocated with Tipu Sultan, the Tyrant of Mysore. Deceased Tipu apologists like Girish Karnad will naturally conceal this bigoted, heartless historical precedent.

The Unsullied Warrior of Sanatana Dharma

Jayapaladeva's end was truly befitting his life as an unsullied warrior of Sanatana Dharma: fearless, courageous, proud, relentless, determined, uncompromising and honourable. After his release from Mahmud's bondage, he wrote to his son Anandapala and publicly declared to his citizens that he was unfit to rule any longer. He had let them down and he himself had been degraded by this cow-eating, Murti-breaking Mleccha. Death was preferable to a life of shame and dishonour. Towards the end of 1001 CE, this noble Kshatriya, in accordance with the code of his ancient Dharma so dear to him, to preserve which he fought continuously, shaved off his head, lay down on a pyre and set fire to it, to himself.

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3

The Loss of the Aryavarata Consciousness

The history lessons that 10th Century Bharatavarsha Teaches Us

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Ancient India vanished with the arrival of the barbaric Turkish Muslim hordes most notably led by the Islamic zealot and the proud destroyer of Hindu temples, Mahmud of Ghazni. He also wiped out whatever remained of the Arab Muslims in Sindh and wrote a darker, bloodier chapter than what Muhammad bin Qasim had written in the region.

The Turkish Muslim domination in Central Asia was built on the smoking embers of the Abbasid Caliphate, Tahirids, and Samanids. In the 990s decade, two Turkish families divided the remnants of the Samanid Empire between themselves. The Ilak Khans of Turkistan captured

Bukhara and by 999 CE, finished off whatever remained of the Samanids and gained absolute control of all territories to the north of the Oxus River (Amu Darya). The territories lying the to the south were pocketed by the Yaminis, popularly known to Indians as the Ghaznavids. The founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty was Sabuktigin, a 15-year old boy-slave purchased by Aliptigin in the thriving slave market at Bukhara. Aliptigin was so infatuated with this handsome young lad that he eventually raised him to the status of a general, which in due course led to the founding of the Ghaznavid Empire. His son Mahmud was its most barbaric but gifted military leader. And in 1000 CE, when he turned his attention to India after capturing Ghazni in 998 CE, he intuitively recognized that it was vulnerable as never before and decided to exploit it to the fullest extent.

This is what he saw.

The Hindu kingdoms in mainland India were blissfully unaware of Mahmud's Islam-fuelled imperial vision and design from the vantage of Ghazni. Centuries of civilisational amnesia had crept into their historical consciousness by then. They had largely forgotten what K.M. Munshi calls the *Aryavarta Consciousness* which threw up 'values and institutions of great vigour and tenacity' and for centuries, had enabled them to easily ward off and drive away alien invasions from the time of Alexander, the Bactrian Greeks, the Kushanas, the Sakas and the Huns. It was the same Aryavarta Consciousness that had produced the ascetic Chanakya-Kautilya, one of the world's greatest political philosophers, economists, and statesman-strategists. This Aryavarta Consciousness had endowed India with a continuous vigour and vitality, which was precisely what

enabled them to swat away the Arab incursions in Sindh for three centuries.

However, by the mid and late 10th Century, these Hindu kingdoms had recklessly squandered this millennia-old civilisational vigour through mindless, unnecessary infighting. All they now possessed were the mere outward trappings and not the spirit embodied in the Vedas that

> *Aryavarata was the sacred land of Dharma,*
> *the elevated path to Heaven and to Moksha;*
> *where men were nobler than the Devatas themselves;*
> *where all knowledge, thought and worship*
> *were rooted in the Vedas, revealed by the Devatas themselves.*

Even worse, these Hindu kingdoms naively, literally, and foolishly took for granted, for example, Medhatithi's dictum that

> Aryavarta was so called because the Aryas sprang up in it again and again. Even if it was overrun by the mlechchhas, they could never abide there for long.

Apart from Medhatithi, there was also the widespread belief among Hindu rulers (and the general populace) that 'whenever a crisis arose, a *chakravartin*, a world-emperor, would rise in the land and re-establish Dharma.' In the 10th Century, this belief was a precursor to the pervasive fatalism that afflicted the Hindu psyche across large parts of an India under a five-century Muslim domination.

However, this belief in the assured, future rise of a *Chakravartin* had a solid basis in the reality of Bharatavarsha's pre-Islamic history where the

ancient Dharma had repeatedly triumphed (for example, the successful repulsions of Greeks, Huns, and other foreign invaders). This was for a fundamental reason, which is again rooted in the Vedic genius: the victory of Dharma was guided, complemented, and sustained by Kshatra or the spirit of valour. One of the core elements or qualities of the spirit of Kshatra is to maintain equilibrium at all levels: political, social and individual. The quality of civilisational stability and sustenance is also built into this spirit of Kshatra. Or, in a more contemporary idiom,

> In the history of the world, it is only Hinduism that gave not only to India but to all her neighbours an organic conception of society based upon economic as well as spiritual needs…it attempted to mitigate the evil consequences of great disparity by aiming at only the essentials…**Liberty and law were synthesized to achieve spiritual freedom.**

With the downfall of the Gupta Empire, this integrated and holistic vision of Indian civilisation was lost forever and the successive Hindu Empires that emerged upon its wreckage were uniformly, consistently one-eyed. The Hindu kingdoms on the anvil of the barbaric raid of Mahmud of Ghazni were not lacking in Kshatra. What they had lost was the integral spirit of Kshatra so inevitable for sustaining their ancient Dharma. K.M. Munshi echoes this tragic spiritual loss of civilisation in the following words:

> The consciousness in [the] political aspect [of the Aryavarta consciousness] had all but disappeared during the few decades which preceded A.D. 1000 on account of the recurring upheavals in

> North India. The empire of Kanauj, which had stabilised North India for well-nigh 150 years and supported the Shahi kings of the North-West, had disintegrated. Now Raghukulabhuchakravarti, 'the World-Emperor of Raghu's race', was merely a symbol of a vanished greatness, ruling over a small territory around Kanauj on the sufferance of his erstwhile feudatories.

But there was something even worse that the Hindu kings were endowed with: the noble code of Hindu war ethics. If belief in a future liberating *Chakravartin* was in the realm of hope, this sort of war ethics was in the realm of sheer physical survival. As history shows, these Hindu kings went to war armed with the following sacrosanct weapons:

- No matter how grave the enemy's provocation, the temple, the Murti, the Shrine, the cow, and the Brahmana were not to be touched.
- War was a privilege accorded only to the Kshatriyas (or those who enrolled for a life of military honour) and harming civilian population was a serious lapse of Kshatriya Dharma. However, there is plenty of evidence that shows that all classes of the Hindu society participated in the repeated wars to save their Dharma.
- The chastity of women, which was held in divine reverence by the Kshatriyas, was inviolable.

When we survey this aspect of our history, we also find that the Hindu kings on the threshold of Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion had apparently learnt no lessons from the bestial appetiser of a Muslim raid that Muhammad bin Qasim had served about three centuries ago.

And so, when Mahmud surveyed this scene from his fortress in the city of Ghazni, the Jewel and capital of the Ghaznavid Empire, he smiled at the prospect of the assured victories and the splendid wealth that was ripe for his picking. As far as he was concerned, he was a staunch practitioner of the Islamic tradition of war in which there was no honour, only victory—absolute, and total.

The rest is…well, history.

Notes

1. For a fuller discussion, see for example: Hindus beyond the Hindu Kush: Indians in the Central Asian Slave Trade.” Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. 12: C Scott Levi, 2002
2. Foreword by K.M. Munshi to The History and Culture of the Indian People: Vol 5: R C Majumdar: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2015: p viii.
3. Vishnupurana: II, 3, 4. Paraphrased by the author.
4. Medhaithi’s commentary on Manusmriti: II. 22
5. Foreword of K.M. Munshi to The History and Culture of the Indian People: Vol 5: R C Majumdar: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2015: p x
6. For a detailed and in-depth discussion on Kshatra from the Vedic era up to the modern times, see: *The Tradition of Kshaatra in India* at Prekshaa Journal. https://www.prekshaa.in/. This is the English translation of the Kannada original, *Bharatiya Kshatraparampare* by Shatavadhani Dr. R Ganesh.
7. Geopolitcs of India and Greater India: Dr. S Srikanta Sastri: Madhu Publishers, 1943. Emphasis added.
8. See the Foreword by K.M. Munshi to The History and Culture of the Indian People: Vol 3: R C Majumdar: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2015.
9. Foreword of K.M. Munshi to The History and Culture of the Indian People: Vol 5: R C Majumdar: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2015: p x. Emphasis added
10. Devi-Swaroopa: akin to a Mother Goddess

* * *

4

The True Meaning of the “Tower of Victory” at Qutub Minar

An essay delineating the real meaning and civilisational significance of Qutub Minar or The Tower of Victory

* * *

The truism that the more things change the more they remain the same has been proven true once again. Given how the historical-cultural narrative continues to proceed in the mainstream discourse, one can fairly say that *secularism* has lost governments for two consecutive terms but has largely retained its grip over the Hindu psyche, which is still coming to terms with this multi-headed monster. Nowhere is secularism more pronounced and physically visible than in what is celebrated as India’s cultural heritage. Sure, the Taj Mahal might have been deservedly

relegated to its rightful place as a criminally wasteful marble-studded extravagance of a sex-crazed despot.

However, Taj Mahal garners headline-level mentions due to its sheer… err…size and the fantastic legends that have been built around it for centuries. But under its great shadow, other similar monuments built with far a more sinister mindset and motivations do not hog the limelight.

One such monument is the fabled Qutub Minar. The Tower of Victory. The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. Commissioned by the alien Turkic Muslim invader, the mass-murderer of Hindus and inveterate destroyer of Sanatana temples, Murtis, and other constructions, Qutub-ud-din Aibak.

Here’s its full story.

The Tower of a Turkic Slave's Fanatical Victory

"Little Finger" Qutub-ud-din Aibak was born of humble origins in remote Turkistan to Turkic parents. As a boy, he was bought by a slave merchant and sold to a *Qazi* named Fakhr-ud-din at Nishapur. The *Qazi* took pity on him and educated him along with his sons in reading the Quran, horse riding and archery. When the *Qazi* died an untimely death, his sons sold Aibak to a wealthy merchant who in turn sold him to Muhammad of Ghori in the city of Ghazni.

Aibak, literally meaning, "little finger," quickly earned Muhammad's favour and climbed up the ranks by the dint of sheer humility and unquestioned obedience. But it was due to his solid performance in the decisive Second Battle of Tarain in 1192 that he attained the status of military *supremo* in Muhammad's army. The sultan awarded him the title, *Qutub-ud-din,* "the Pole Star of the Faithful." More goodies followed in its wake. Muhammad entrusted *all* his future conquests in Hindustan to Qutub-ud-din Aibak. He now had absolute freedom and power to take any decision regarding Hindustan.

Qutub-ud-din didn't disappoint. He established a temporary base at Indraprastha near Delhi. Then he occupied Delhi itself by forcibly ejecting a Chahamana feudatory in early 1193. Meanwhile, Hariraja, the brother of the late great Prithviraja Chahamana, revolted at Ajmer and recaptured it. It was the fulfilment of a collective seething passion to avenge the death of the beloved Prithviraja Chahamana who had fallen not to valour but foul betrayal. However, when Qutub-ud-din marched with a massive force, Hariraja and his army withdrew.

The Incredible Hindu Resistance

Meanwhile in Delhi, the ejected Chahamana feudatory spotted his chance and reoccupied his former domain. Qutub-ud-din rushed back and laid a siege. It was time to teach a permanent lesson to these stubborn infidels. However, Hariraja was again free to recoup his strength. The Chahamana's force in Delhi, confident in their superior numbers, charged out with bravado to meet Qutub-ud-din's siege head on. It was a particularly gruesome and bloody battle. The massacre on both sides was so extraordinary that the "river Jamuna was discoloured with blood." In the end, the Hindu force lost and retreated into the walls of the garrison, and eventually surrendered after a prolonged siege. The bigoted contemporary chronicler, Hasan Nizami celebrates the victory in glowing turns of phrase.

> ***The Rai [Raja] who had fled from Delhi had raised an army of idolatrous…tribes, the vapour of pride and conquest having entered his thoughtless brain. Qutub-ud-din pursued him, and when the wretch was taken, his head was severed from his body…***

Delhi irretrievably fell to the alien Turkic invader, an episode that marks a historical presage. Qutub-ud-din made it his capital, the first capital of what would eventually be called the alien Muslim Sultanate in India.

Qutub-ud-din then marched towards Kol(modern Aligarh) after crossing the Jamuna whose exceedingly pure waters "resembled a mirror." For the longest time, Kol had earned fame as one of the "most celebrated fortresses of Hind." Its capture would be of strategic importance. Aibak assaulted the citadel repeatedly till it fell and the infidels inside it "who

were wise accepted the light of Islam” but those who “stood by their ancient faith were slain with the sword.” His chiefs and nobles burst inside and “carried off much treasures and countless plunder” including one thousand horses.

The Original Destroyer of Varanasi

Then the news reached him there: his sultan, Muhammad of Ghori had decided to return to Hindustan for a fresh wave of devastation whose central purpose was to punish Raja Jayachandra, the king of the Gahadawala Dynasty ruling the Antaravedi country in the Kanauj region. Flourishing commercial centres and sacred pilgrimage spots including Kanyakubja and Kashi were under his control. Qutub-ud-din marched forthwith and received his Master and had the honour of kissing his hands, an act considered to be the “highest of glories.” After this, he submitted an elephant laden with gold, silver, rubies, a hundred horses and all kinds of perfumes.

Next, the sultan and his slave strategized and prepared for the upcoming expedition against the infidel Jayachandra. When the roll call was taken, it amounted to a whopping fifty thousand-strong cavalry, a good chunk of it supplied by Qutub-ud-din. Indeed, Muhammad had wisely not underestimated the prowess and fighting force of Jayachandra.

Aibak led the vanguard with a thousand cavalry and met Jayachandra at Chandawar on the banks of the Yamuna in a vast plain between Etawah and Kanauj. It was an evenly matched contest with neither side relenting. At one point, Jayachandra gained the upper hand forcing the Muslim army to backtrack. Given the copious and confusing historical chronicles of this landmark Battle of Chandawar, the actual details are hazy. However, a common thread emerges with reasonable accuracy. Either Aibak himself or someone in his army fatally shot Jayachandra with an arrow. The Gahadawala King fell down on the ground from his elephant. A familiar

scene unfolded in the Hindu army: confusion and chaos erupted. Quite naturally, Qutub-ud-din turned it to his advantage. It was the most opportune moment to purge “the impurities of idolatry” and rid “the country of Hind from vice and superstition.” The words in quotes are perhaps the mildest selections from the descriptions given by the Muslim chroniclers of the wanton orgy of genocide and bloodletting of Hindus that followed. It makes for truly sickening reading. Bestiality was unleashed on an appalling scale—heartless, random massacre, pillage, plunder, destruction, and rapine were carried out as a grand celebration. Hindu temples and shrines and Murtis were broken and burnt and razed to the ground and their accumulated treasures, offered as Naivedya by countless devotees over centuries were looted in one go.

The chroniclers Hasan Nizami and Firishta differ in their descriptions of this ghastly event only in detail and phraseology. Nizami exults at this “distribution of justice” and “repression of idolatry” while Firishta proudly narrates that “the number of infidels slain on just this day” was so staggering that it was long “before the body of” Jayachandra could be found by his friends who had been allowed to search the mountain of corpses.

Muhammad of Ghori was elated but still hungry.

One Thousand Temples Destroyed in One Go

The peerless ancient centre of Sanatana Dharma, the home of every Sanatana sect, path and school, the repose of all the thirty-three crore Deities in the Hindu pantheon, the *Maha-Smashana* (the Great Graveyard that liberates one from the endless cycle of birth and death) guarded by Mahadeva, the Kotwal himself…was now left wholly defenceless. Kashi. Varanasi. Benares. The city that exuded the radiance of the highest, the deepest, and the most profound yearnings of philosophy and spirituality. A radiance that was couched in the root of its very name: Kashi, from the Sanskrit root, *Kash*, meaning "light," "effulgent." Now, it was prey for the aforementioned "distribution of justice," a pious act that involved the pitiless destruction of *one thousand temples* and the construction of an equal number of mosques on the same foundations using the debris of these razed temples. Varanasi's very first and fiendish brush with the faith of peace and light permanently altered and marred its physical landscape. Needless, the collective wealth of all these temples was added to Muhammad's unquenchable thirst to plunder this infidel land.

Next, he proceeded unimpeded to the Gahadawala fort at Asni where Jayachandra's treasury was located, and pillaged it completely. An estimate of the staggering booty that Muhammad obtained during just this expedition is given: (i) *Firishita*: four thousand camels were loaded with the said spoils (ii) *Ibn Asir*: fourteen hundred camels loaded with plunder. Before Muhammad finally departed for Ghazni, "the record of his celebrated holy wars had been written in histories and circulated throughout the breadth of" Hindustan.

Stories that Secularist History Hide

Fresh troubles had erupted elsewhere for Qutub-ud-din Aibak leaving him no leisure to savour the pious victory and his share of the lavish plunder seized at Varanasi and Asni. **The Hindu rulers had merely accepted a military defeat but had not given up.** The abhorrent outrages that followed in the wake of each Muslim invasion and attack had etched a permanent hatred in their minds for these despicable Turushkas. Big or small, whenever they found an opening, a weakness, they hit back. Now, it was with Kol and Ajmer. In 1195, just a year later, the Dor Rajputs laid siege to wrest back this famous garrison now under Muslim control. However, the brave endeavor failed miserably, brutally. Hasan Nizami the bigot exults how the Dor Rajputs were akin to "foxes playing with lions," who were swiftly dispatched to the "**fire of hell.**" Three bastions were raised "as high as heaven" with the severed heads of these Rajputs signaling a grave warning. Their carcasses "became the food of beasts of prey." And then, as was customary, the entire land was "**was freed from idols and idol worship, and the foundations of infidelity were destroyed**."

Ajmer proved tougher. The still-unsubdued brother of Prithviraja Chahamana, the same Hariraja had not only recouped his strength but had made some smart alliances to harass Aibak. One such alliance was with a Jat chieftain who was marching against Aibak's Delhi stronghold itself. A measure of the kind of fear his march instilled among the Muslims is given by Hasan Nizami in his typical bigoted style:

> *The Jat supported by an army hastened to the borders of Delhi, and the people were suddenly caught in the darkness of his oppression and turbulence, and the blood and property of the Musulmans fell into danger and destruction.*

Meanwhile, Hariraja had invested the massive fort of Ajmer that rightfully belonged to his deceased brother, a proud inheritance of the Chahamanas. **This *third* rebellion in a space of two years against Muslim occupation** was a courageous act of reclamation but in Nizami's eyes, it was a "standard of perdition…fanned by the flames of idolatry in his heart" and therefore had "delivered the reins of vanity into the hands of Satan, and having conceived the ladders of grandeur in his brain, had become proud."

An incensed Qutub-ud-din left a military detachment to guard Delhi, sped towards Ajmer and blocked the Jat chieftain who gave him a spirited battle but had to retreat all the way back into the fort of Ajmer. Aibak blockaded the fort, locking Hariraja within. The prolonged siege obtained the desired results: finding himself vastly outnumbered and having no escape route, Hariraja voluntarily embraced death by burning himself on the funeral pyre instead of facing the humiliation of surrender and inevitable captivity.

Aibak then barged into one of the most "celebrated forts in Hind" and cut off infidelity and "utterly" ripped out "the foundations of idol-worship." Nizami praises Qutub-ud-din as "The Blessed Lamp" and gloats how the celebrated Rajas and Ranas rubbed their foreheads on the ground before this lamp. Aibak annexed Ajmer to the Delhi dominions and left behind a Muslim governor.

The Tower of “Victory”

When Aibak returned to Delhi flushed with these great victories, he decided to commemorate them by building the first ever mosque in the city. But it was not enough to simply build the Quwwat-ul-Islam, the “glory of Islam.” It necessitated an emphatic spectacle and a permanent reminder of what this glory meant in actual practice. Accordingly, **Qutub-ud-din Aibak demolished twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples and used their debris as construction material for the mosque.** The Quwwat-ul-Islam is noted for the *Qutub Minar*, the “tower of victory,” celebrating and stamping the first ever Muslim conquest in the heart of Delhi.

The same applies to the “construction” of the *Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra* mosque in Ajmer built after razing down the existing Sanskrit College, which had housed a beautiful Saraswati Temple within.

Epilogue

The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque also earned another distinction. Iltutmish, Qutub-ud-din's slave and successor, completed the construction of the Qutub Minar. Around 1233-4, he marched to Ujjaini, the beloved city of Mahakavi Kalidasa, and home to the magnificent and sublime Mahakala Temple (or Mahakal) dedicated to Shiva, one of the twelve sacred *Jyotirlingas*.

Quite naturally, Iltutmish regarded it as one of the great hubs of infidel idolatry. With a savage stroke, he demolished this exquisite temple, a majestic, living proof and a profoundly dignified symbol of the possibilities of what innate devotion and stainless piety could accomplish when it finds unsullied expression in architecture and refined sculpture. A work of three hundred painstaking years and countless generations of dedicated, joyous, backbreaking work, an awe-inspiring system of transmitting generational knowledge, an economic framework and political stability that sustained all this tragically fell to the sword and the pickaxe and the fire of a determined, zealous vandal inspired by Islamic piety. After the pious ravaging was complete, Iltutmish ordered his troops to carry these broken idols and "many other figures" and "brass statues of Vikramaditya and other notable rulers" to Delhi where they were "broken at the door of the great" Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque so that the Faithful could trample upon it.

Qutub Minar. Tower of victory. Indeed.

References

1. Nishapur is now in the Khorasan Razavi Province, Iran.
2. The accurate meaning of the word “Aibak” is disputed. According to some scholars, “Aibak” might also mean the name of a tribe or a town.
3. Taju-l Ma’asir: Hasan Nizami. Quoted in The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians: Vol 3, Elliot and Dawson. p 220
4. Kol was also known as Koil before the 18th Century. Its origins are obscure. A Puranic account narrates that Balarama slew the demon named Kol in this region and with the help of the Ahir people, established peace and order. Another account attributes the establishment of this city to the Dor Rajputs in the fourth century CE. The latter account can reasonably be verified by the ruins of the Dor fort still standing in Aligarh. For fuller details, see: Descriptive and Historical Account of the Aligarh District: Edwin T. Atkinson: Oxford University Press, 1875
5. Taju-l Ma’asir: Hasan Nizami. Quoted in The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians: Vol 2, Elliot and Dawson. p 222
6. 6. Jayachandra is the same Jaichand mentioned in the epic poem, *Prithviraj Raso,* which blames him for betraying Prithviraja Chahamana. The account is historically inaccurate. However, the name “Jaichand” continues to be synonymous with “traitor.”
7. Taj-ul-Maasir: Hasan Nizami: Quoted in The History of India As Told by Its Own Historians: Vol 2, Elliot and Dawson. p 224

8. “The conqueror entered the city and its vicinity was freed from idols and idol-worship; and in the sanctuaries of the images of the gods, mosques were razed by the worshippers of the one God” — Taj-ul-Maasir: Hasan Nizami quoted in: Qutab Minar & Adjoining Monuments: Archeological Survey of India, 2002 p 31.
9. The construction of the first storey of the Qutub Minar began some time in 1199.
10. *Adhai din ka Jhonpra* literally means, “Shed of two-and-half days.” Also known as “Dhai Din ki Masjid.” It was the second mosque to be built in India by the Mamluk Slave kings, the first being the aforementioned Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi. For a detailed history of this mosque, see: Ajmer’s Adhai din ka Jhonpra: K.D.L. Khan: Spectrum, The Tribune, September 2, 2007.
11. The Mahakala temple was since rebuilt and is still renowned for its extraordinary *Bhasmarti*. However, it is not even a pale shadow of what it had once been.

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5

Reducing Sri Krishnadevaraya to a Footnote of Indian History

Sri Krishnadevaraya was the greatest emperor who took the grand Vijayanagara Empire to its zenith. Yet he has been reduced to a mere footnote in contemporary books on Indian History.

* * *

An unfortunate outcome of the contemporary fashion of thinking and the resultant public discourse is the fact that with each successive decade since Independence, the Indian (more importantly, Hindu) society has been eroded of its capacity of our society to produce heroes. In a line, this thinking is shaped by the cowardly and knavish view that all values are equal. Who are today's "heroes?" Or role models or icons? They're derived mainly from the entertainment, fashion, business and sports streams. Equally, the widespread (primarily Marxist) notion that all

people–no matter what their genuine achievements are–are “subjects” to be “analysed,” has also contributed greatly to this erosion. Thus, when you have no one towering person or hero to look up to, your value system will emanate from corporate and fashion-of-the-moment slogans and maxims that pass off as “values” and so on.

In our own time, the never ending dissemination of all manner of information–views, perspectives, ideologies, etc–has resulted in an explosion of confusion. When you have an avalanche of information overload, you no longer can get at the truth on any issue–there’s always another smart guy at the next bend armed with his or her own bundle of “views.”

Ananda Coomaraswamy's Prophecy Fulfilled

In India, it's worse. The average urban, English-educated Indian Hindu since Independence is a stranger in his own land and has today brought to fruition Ananda Coomaraswamy's prophetic warning that this Hindu is "a nondescript and superficial being deprived of all roots, a sort of intellectual pariah who does not belong to the East or the West, the past or the future."

This urban Hindu also continues to take pride in repaying his or her debt to Macaulay who wrote to his father in a letter dated 12 October 1836 gloating that

Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully… The effect of this education on the Hindoos is prodigious. No Hindoo, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion… It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence…

A measure of the success of his putridly perverse vision can be seen today even in those who mistakenly assume they "know" Hinduism and write rather uninformed tomes on Hinduism deriding "ritual" and "idol-worship." Even worse, observe a verifiable fact the next time you're in any social or transactional situation in an urban setting: *"educated" middle class Hindus frequently talk about themselves and about India in the* ***third person.***

Macaulay was also accurate when he identified Bengal as the prime target for said English education: apart from this state being one of the

foundational British military conquests in India, it also had rich and vibrant traditions and practices of Hinduism in the intellectual, scholarly and philosophical realms, which the British could never really break despite establishing their military and political control. But this was eventually broken by the Bengali Hindus themselves when sections of their elite began embracing British education, social mores and outlook. Even a Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and others in their mould couldn't prevent the eventual decline and decay of this hoary, holy *karma bhumi* into a wasteland thanks to its deadly embrace of Communism. Remember: the only thing that grows in the wreckage of Communism is unchecked Jihadism.

Indeed, for all the Leftist claims of breaking away from British colonialism in Independent India, they were actually responsible for fine-tuning it in a manner and on a scale that even the British couldn't envision. They sought to supplant British imperialism in India with the Soviet (and to an extent Chinese) variety, most notably in the educational realm and met with remarkable success in the endeavour.

In fact, a marked characteristic of the Leftist ransack of Indian history is the systematic manner in which they have succeeded in brainwashing at least three generations of Indians to be ashamed of taking pride in timeless, unbroken cultural and local traditions and accomplishments to the extent that both lay readers and students are repelled at and therefore disown them. This perversion also extends to our heroes, saints, poets, philosophers and the rest.

India’s Valuable Heritage has Hindu Roots

Unsurprisingly this long heritage which we have every reason to be proud of happens to be Hindu. Perhaps in no other country has self-hatred succeeded and touched its pinnacle as it has in India.

Consider a sample of the kinds of things Indians take pride in: almost every tiny hamlet, village, boulder, hill, cave, tree, lake, and river in the remotest corner of India has what you call a *sthala purana* or local legend or tale. To the inhabitants of that place, it is a living truth in the present continuous: it provides them the heroes they need, and gives them the values and ideals that guide their lives. To that extent, these legends, heroes, and artifacts are worship-worthy. You might with the might of your scholarship, prove that it is a mere legend and a fiction but you cannot negate the real experience that’s wedded to and guides the lives of the inhabitants of the place.

However, as we have seen, if your scholarship has ideological and/or political backing coupled with lung power, you’ll succeed not just in showing how amazing your scholarship is, but tragically, in destroying a generations-old value system that made people better people. It’s a different matter that this sort of scholarship has only the power to destroy these lived values but doesn’t provide an equivalent alternative forget offering a better replacement.

Reducing Krishnadevaraya to a Footnote of History

There is no better illustration of this phenomenon than the classic case of Hampi, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Today, it has become a haven for drug addicts, pedophiles, rampant prostitution, and wholesale land encroachment. Dargahs and mosques continue to obtrude on the landscape around the site of Hampi and successive Governments have obstinately chosen to ignore the travesty while the locals suffer from the same cultural amnesia described in the first essay of this volume.

Equally, the government-sponsored history of the Vijayanagara Empire that made Hampi one of the greatest and grandest cities of the world in its time is yet another proof of the Leftist incursions into Indian history.

In my time in school, all that I learnt about the Vijayanagara Empire and its most famous ruler, Krishnadevaraya was just this: it was a great empire, and Krishnadevaraya was a powerful king who achieved magnificent victories, occupied other kingdoms, planted trees, strengthened the economy, and patronized the arts. But the details were missing as to how he achieved all of this. Put another way, this is a beautiful academic tactic to reduce this iconic king to a mere footnote.

Today, it's even worse. The Hampi University's multi-volume history of Karnataka under the chief editorship of **Prof. Sheik Ali** dedicates a paltry few pages to Krishnadevaraya and completely downplays the role of Sage Vidyaranya, the spiritual inspiration for and founder of the Vijayanagara Empire. However, an entire volume is dedicated to glorifying Tipu Sultan, the tyrant of Mysore. That this academic

pantomime occurred under the Vice Chancellorship of the valiant Kannada champion, Prof. Chandrashekhara Kambara is pertinent to mention.

The underlying foundation of this coloured history of the Vijayanagar Empire can be couched in a line: The Vijayanagara Empire was just another powerful empire founded as a “rebellion” against the Delhi Sultanate. To understand how *else* this plays out, we can briefly examine what the late Prof. M M Kalburgi said in 2010.

Krishna Deva Raya did “nothing” to promote Kannada language. “I would not hesitate to call him anti-Kannadiga. He suppressed our language by patronising Telugu poets in his court.” …Plus, he encouraged Tamils too. Today if you find large pockets of Tamilians living in Bangalore, it is because of Krishna Deva Raya.

Prof. Kalburgi has taken a folio directly out of the book of aggressive Dravidianism premised on the primacy, separateness, antiquity and supremacy of the Tamil language. Historical facts speak otherwise. It appears that Prof. Kalburgi forgets that *there was no individual or separate state named Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh or Tamil Nadu in Krishnadevarya’s period*.

If anything, the vast collections of both inscriptions and literary works by contemporary poets describe Krishnadevaraya variously as *Kannada Rajya Ramaa Ramana* (Lord Vishnu Kannada Kingdom), *Muru Rayara Ganda* (The King of Three Kings) and *Kannadaraya* (The King of Kannada). Almost every other inscription of the time refers to the Vijayanagara Empire as *Karnata Samrajya* (Karnataka Empire). Krishnadevaraya also patronized several well-known Kannada poets including Chatuvittalanatha, and Gubbi Mallanna who in turn praised his patron’s generosity and his spirit of inclusiveness. Krishnadevaraya is one

of the very rare kings who became the ideal hero and role model for two states (as the meaning of the word “state” is understood today) simultaneously–people of both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh till date remember him with inspiration, fondness, respect, and gratitude. Indeed, if we go by Prof Kalburgi’s reasoning, the Kannada blockbuster historical movie, *Sri Krishnadevaraya* wouldn’t have been made.

Krishnadevaraya also held in great esteem Swami Vyasaraya (or Vyasatirtha), one of the greatest exponents of Madhvacharya’s Dvaita philosophy, and made him the *Raja Guru* (official guru of the king). It was Vyasaraya who propagated the Haridasa movement in a far-reaching manner in large parts of South India. Vyasaraya was also the guru of the celebrated Purandaradasa (regarded as the father of Carnatic classical music), and Kanakadasa (another celebrated Haridasa poet, singer, and saint). It’s a sign of times that contemporary casteist politicians spearheaded by current Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah have tried to appropriate Kanakadasa’s legacy because he hailed from the Kuruba varna.

These saints are still widely revered in Karnataka, their songs are still sung in classical concerts and recited as poems in daily life. And all of them flourished under Krishnadevaraya’s rule. Thus the credit for their Haridasa tradition which has remained unbroken is also due in equal measure to Krishnadevaraya.

Besides, in Krishnadevaraya’s time, Telugu literature had reached its peak as compared to its Kannada counterpart. Should one fault Krishnadevaraya because Kannada didn’t produce dazzling litterateurs as the Telugu language did at the time? Every language throughout its history does have cycles of prosperity and drought. It’s just the way it is. If the

learned Prof Kalburgi blames this known phenomenon of linguistic history on Krishnadevaraya, the least we can do is to point him in the direction of common sense.

Equally, being a genuine connoisseur of fine arts and accommodative of all religious, sects and philosophies and languages, Krishnadevarya not only had a number of Tamil poets in his court but patronized scholars from faraway Bengal.

Suffice to say that Krishnadevaraya indeed remains the greatest ruler of the Vijayanagara empire. His military success was unmatched both by his predecessors or successors. Under him, the Vijayanagara Empire held sway over the largest swathe of geography than under any of his predecessors or successors. He maintained law and order, delivered justice and security to his subjects, took economic prosperity and cultural grandeur to the highest levels.

The West hankered to do trade with him and wrote glowing accounts of the economic prosperity of Vijayanagara under his rule. He was well-versed in music, played musical instruments, and composed wrote fine poetry and other forms of literature. His epic poem *Amuktamalyada* remains one of the masterpieces of Telugu literature.

Indeed, a comprehensive work exploring Krishnadevaraya’s life, times and achievements is waiting to be written in English.

Incurable Love for Muslim Barbarians and Mass-Murderers

When we contrast this with the uncountable tomes glorifying tyrants and barbarians like Ala-ud-din Khalji, Muhammad bin Tughluq, Babar and Aurangzeb, we return to where we began. The standard modus operandi of the Marxist “historians” seems to be to extol Muslim despots and paint Hindu rulers as rebels. Fortunately, numerous Hindu dynasties have left behind records of their reign and accomplishments. In such cases, because ignoring them is impossible, the Marxist tactic has been to completely downplay them. Thus, the Guptas, Palas, Senas, Chalukyas, and the Vijayanagara Empires are reduced to mere footnotes.

It is a fact that the academic establishment is well beyond repair and efforts at reform are hampered by bureaucratic and other obstacles. In the last seventy years, there have been really few instances where serious and valuable work has been done, and whatever little has been done hasn’t reached the so-called masses.

But in a counter development of sorts over the last forty years, some truly exemplary and original work on the history and culture of India has emanated from outside the formal academic establishment. A good majority of these works have been written not by professional historians and scholars but by people who genuinely care about depicting the truth of our past and shorn of ideological or political blinkers.

Notes

1. *Education in India: Essays in national idealism:* Ananda K Coomaraswamy, 1910
2. *Who's the Charioteer? : 7 February 2010, The New Indian Express*
3. See for example: Sources of Vijayangar History: S Krishnaswami Aiyangar, University of Madras, 1919
4. The Connoisseurial Climate of Krishnadevarya's Period: Prekshaa Journal.

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6

The Catastrophic Battle of Talikota is an Eternal Warning and Civilisational Red Flag

The depressing tale of how a grand civilisation centred in Hampi was brutally annihilated and why it is an everlasting lesson.

* * *

The Renaissance in Europe witnessed the revival, restoration and resurgence of the ancient, classical traditions of the Greeks and the Romans chiefly in the spheres of art, literature, and other cultural elements. This revival found brilliant expression in the syllabi of various centres of higher learning throughout Europe. For over three centuries, these educational institutions made classical studies mandatory even for those students and aspiring scholars who later pursued the pure sciences.

Indeed, it is not coincidental that Greek and Latin names are assigned to the elements found in the Periodic Table, and the fact that biological taxonomy is replete with Greek and Latin terms.

However, these classical traditions were entirely pre-Christian in spirit, character and expression. And it makes sense that they were revived during the Renaissance period because this period was singularly characterised by a rejection of and rebellion against the stranglehold of the Church that had pushed Europe into the Heart of Darkness for at least a thousand years.

What we today know as the finer aspects of modern Western civilisation are therefore the combined appropriations of this pre-Christian heritage. Indeed, right from the names of behemoth corporations of today like Oracle, Amazon, and Nike, the influence of ancient Greece and Rome have been indelibly, subconsciously implanted in the DNA of the modern West and westernised Indians as well.

The Guardian Force of Sanatana Dharma

This cultural phenomenon applies in equal measure to one of the world's greatest empires: the Vijayanagara Empire. If *Abhijata* (pristine or classical) Hinduism continues to survive in whatever form in South India today, the entire credit for it still rests on the shoulders of this Empire for building such a sturdy foundation way back in the mid 14th century CE.

One can still witness the numerous evidences of this grandeur in the temples built during that era (some of which continue to flourish even today), in Dharmic rituals, endowments, holdovers of administrative concepts, in the arts, in the way festivals are celebrated (Mysore Dussera being the greatest and world-renowned example) and so on.

The period during which the foundations for the Vijayanagara Empire were laid by the intrepid Harihara and Bukkaraya (known as the Sangama Brothers) under the spiritual guidance of Maharshi Vidyaranya was truly happening and exciting. Not only did they lead from the front but inspired countless others to do the same.

Bukkaraya's son, Kumara Kampana had distinguished himself as a warrior of repute early on. However, it is the extremely gifted Queen of Kumara Kampana, poetess extraordinaire, Gangadevi who gives us a valuable account of the condition of the period. She laments thus in the classic epic poem, *Madhura Vijayam* (The Victory over Madhura). Numbers in square brackets indicate the verse number below.

> O King! The city, which is called Madhurapuri for its honeyed loveliness, has now become the city of cruel beasts; it now lives up

to its earlier name of Vyaghrapuri, the city of tigers because humans don’t dwell there (anymore). [1]

Those temples of Gods, which used to reverberate with the sacred melody of the mridangam, now echo the dreadful howls of jackals. [5]

In the Brahmin Quarters [Agraharams] of our city, huge columns of smoke emanating from the scared Yagnas used to rise up and reach the skies amid the sacred Vedic chants but alas! today those selfsame Quarters send up wretched stenches of meat roasted by the Turushkas; the Vedic chants are today replaced by the beastly cacophonies of drunken hoodlums. [7]

During the days of Pandyas, our women used to bathe in [river] Taamraparni, whose waters turned white from the sandal-paste applied to their breasts. My lord! Now she’s coloured only in red from the currents of blood flowing into her from all the cows slaughtered by its wicked occupiers all over the country. [13]

O King! I cannot bear to look at the countenance of those Dravida ladies who were bounteously endowed with beauty. Ravished horribly by the scourging Turushkas, these delicate women now sport lifeless lips and exhale hot breaths, and their abundant tresses that have come undone are painful to the eyes. I don’t have the words to describe the suffering and dishonour painted on their faces, which know neither redemption nor protection. [15]

Gangadevi’s lament did not fall on deaf ears. By 1370 CE, a determined Kumara Kampana had succeeded in annihilating the sputtering vestiges of

the infamous Madurai Sultanate by routing Nasir-ud-din, the so-called Sultan who ruled Madurai.

This period also witnessed swift conquests and the beginning of the consolidation of all territories in South India and eventually paved the way for making Vijayanagara the most unassailable and prosperous empire in South India for the next two hundred-odd years. The Vijayanagara Empire thus stood as the sweeping and insurmountable political Vindhya shielding all of South India from the relentless and barbaric depredations of Muslim armies.

Yet, as the poet says, when fate summons, monarchs must obey. And so is it with empires. As with the downfall of the Roman Empire, so with the downfall of the Vijayanagara Empire.

From Kumara Kampana's heroic and victorious exploits to Proudha Devaraya's glorious regime, the Vijayanagara Empire reached its zenith under Sri Krishnadevaraya. But in just 36 years after his death in 1529, the collapse of this mighty empire was swift, sudden and total.

And its story is not pretty.

It occurred on January 23, 1565 in that fateful Battle of Talikota, or what I call the *Sunset Battle of the Hindus.*

Partial picture of an Empire in Decline

We can reasonably trace the seeds of this Sunset Battle to *Aliya* (literally: son-in-law) Rama Raya, the son-in-law of Krishnadevaraya. Rama Raya was a valiant commander, a tactful and fearsome warrior who had led several successful campaigns under Krishnadevaraya. He was also an able administrator and a skilful diplomat.

Rama Raya was also endowed with a fatal flaw: an unquenchable thirst for power, haughtiness and overconfidence in his own abilities. He was also given to excessive sensual indulgence.

After Krishnadevaraya's death, the throne passed on to his younger brother, Achyuta Raya who died in 1542 CE. His nephew, Sadashiva Raya was then a minor. Rama Raya seized this opportunity and eventually put Sadashiva Raya under virtual house arrest.

Acting as regent, he quickly took control of state power and replaced officers in important positions with people personally loyal to him. However, till the end, he could not become king because he had not descended from the royal lineage of the Rayas of Vijayanagara.

To his credit, Rama Raya was a shrewd political operative. Surrounded by the five hostile Bahamani Kings, he constantly pitted one Sultan against the other and in the process ensured two things: one, he extended the borders of the Vijayanagara Empire occupying territories north of the Krishna river and two, he kept Vijayanagara secure by capitalising on the incessant enmity between the Bahamani Sultans.

However, his luck did eventually run out when the Sultans realised that they had a common foe in Rama Raya.

Germination of the Battle of Talikota

It could be reasonably said that Muslim sources give us a fairly accurate picture of the Talikota Battle compared to their Hindu counterparts, comprising (historical-narrative) vachanas, bakhairs, kaifiyats, the “Keladi Nripavijayam,” etc. These narratives in Kannada were composed several decades after the battle.

In 1589 CE, Qasim Ferishta took up a position with the Sultan of Bijapur and then wrote the history of the Talikota Battle, 24 years after the incident. Some historians do not consider this as an eyewitness or accurate account because a quarter of a century is long enough for several legends and cooked-up historical tales to emerge.

Around 1560 CE, Rafiuddin Shirazi joined the services of the Bijapur ruler Ali Adil Shah and was eventually promoted to the post of prime minister. He lived for 24 years after the Talikota Battle and left behind eyewitness accounts of the battle. This is also corroborated by Mirza Ibrahim Zubairi, who invokes his account of the battle in his Busateenus-Salateen.

Upon the request of Ali Adil Shah, Rama Raya marched against the Ahmednagar kingdom and successfully raided it. Equally, on occasion, the Nizam of Ahmednagar and Qutub Shah of Golconda had sought Rama Raya’s assistance to teach Ali Adil Shah a lesson.

In the foregoing instance, Rama Raya successfully wrested the Raichur *doab* on behalf of these two kings, angering Ali Adil Shah who then sought the advice of his close aides. Two of these aides, Kishwar Khan Lary and Abu Turab Shirazi recommended an alliance of all the Bahamani kings

temporarily forgetting mutual hostilities. And further that this grand alliance should march against Rama Raya. As we've seen, Qutub Shah of Golconda and Hussain Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar had tasted bitter defeat at the hands of Rama Raya on several occasions. Indeed, after Rama Raya's successful campaign against him on behalf of Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur, Nizam Shah was so stricken with mortal fear that he abandoned even the thought of marching against Adil Shah.

And so, the Sultans of Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golconda entered into a joint pact. Accordingly, Chand Bibi (popularly known for her defence of Ahmednagar against the forces of the Mughal emperor, Akbar), daughter of Hussain Nizam Shah was married to Ali Adil Shah I of Bijapur, a marriage of political expediency. Likewise, Murtajabiz the son of the Sultan of Ahmednagar, was married to Adil Shah's sister.

All parties of this alliance agreed to wage war against Vijayanagara after the marriage celebrations were over.

That done, Adil Shah sent an emissary to Rama Raya's court with a message: give up the key forts of Raichur and Mudgal. Rama Raya sent the emissary back with a contemptuous refusal. The same contempt was reserved for the emissaries that followed.

The stage was now set.

The combined forces of Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golconda began to march towards Vijayanagara. Because Bidar's Sultan, Burhan Imadul Mulk was a sworn enemy of Hussain Nizam Shah, he refused to join the coalition. The coalition army eventually reached and pitched camp at a spot near Talikota, which fell under the domain of the Bijapur Sultan.

The battle that followed occurred at Tavarekere (today's Tangadi or Rakkasatangadi), southwest of Talikota.

A Battle of Overconfidence, Stealth and Treachery

The Sultans assembled at Talikota didn’t immediately start war preparations. They indulged in merry-making for several days as a mark of more firmly cementing their circumstance-forged, superficial unity, and resealed their alliance against their common but far superior enemy.

Meanwhile, a supremely overconfident Rama Raya continued to remain unperturbed. He didn’t perceive this as a threat of any consequence and began to make his own preparations.

It is estimated that he sent a contingent of twenty thousand horseback soldiers and a lakh and fifty thousand elephants as advance force under the leadership of his brother Tirumala Raya. He followed this up with another force of sizeable strength and numbers. Historians peg the total strength of the Vijayanagara military force as comprising one lakh horsemen and five lakh infantry.

The task of the advance contingent was to prevent the Bahamani forces from crossing the Krishna river. The force had massive canons forming the leading front. Additionally, sturdy forts at strategic points along the Krishna river were designed to impede the enemy’s attempts at crossing it.

Spies of the Bahamani army reported that there were some places situated about two-three miles along the river line that were unguarded and could help the army cross the river.

Adil Shah conferred with his allies and sought their permission to conduct the war by stealth because whatever Rama Raya’s other faults, the Vijayanagara army was a formidable fighting machine, and all of his adversaries had tasted humiliating defeats at his hands in the past.

Accordingly, Adil Shah ordered his men to adopt this strategy: pretend to attempt crossing the river at a few points and then turn back and then actually try to cross the river from a different place.

When the Vijayanagara army witnessed this, they realised that the enemy's attempts were futile and abandoned their existing positions, thereby falling neatly into the enemy's trap. Adil Shah's strategy proved hugely successful.

The Bahamani army quickly tied up the canons with strong chains. In his cocksure certainty that this was a minor battle, Rama Raya had not even made a Plan B, forget a contingency plan. Neither did he learn any lesson when he saw that he was outwitted. He led from the front and ordered his army to randomly attack the Bahamani force. There was no strategy, no discipline. Even worse, he didn't heed the advice of his ministers who had pleaded with him to to mount a horse. Instead Rama Raya sat in his throne on the elephant. He bombastically motivated his soldiers with the war cry, "We are not cowards to be scared of this insignificant war! Go on, fight!"

As blood-curdling as the cry was, it simply didn't work. The scattered and indisciplined manner in which his soldiers fought began to take its toll. Rama Raya quickly realised this, dismounted, and spread out a heap of enormous quantities of gold, precious stones, and coins and declared that the one who displays the maximum valour would be rewarded with untold wealth and would be royally honoured.

This motivation helped breathe fresh zest into the soldiers who began hacking their way into the Bahamani force. The left flank of the Bahamani force was decimated and what was left of it began to retreat.

This turn of events greatly worried Nizam Shah, Qutub Shah and Ali Barid.

The Fall of Rama Raya

Nizam Shah put up the *Rahtaanat* sign in front of his tent. This sign signifies a holy Islamic oath that the Muslim soldier would die in jihad and attain jannat (heaven). It also meant that no matter what would happen, no Muslim soldier should run away from this Jihad.

As was customary, Nizam Shah's personal entourage was accompanied by hundreds of women of his harem. The chief guard of the harem, a eunuch bearing the title of *Khwajasara* was given strict instructions: in the event that the *Khwajasara* anticipated danger to his own life, he was to first slaughter all the women in the harem before taking any other action.

And so, the combined forces of Nizam Shah, Qutub Shah, Ali Adil Shah and Ali Barid attacked the "Hindu army which was continually gaining an upper hand". Ali Adil Shah managed to chase away Rama Raya's brother, Tirumala Raya all the way up to Kanauj [it is unclear which place this refers to but it is definitely not the famed Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh]. He then turned his attention to Rama Raya. He attacked Rama Raya from the rear while Qutub Shah and Nizam Shah faced him head on.

Even as the battle raged on, an enormous chunk of Muslim soldiers in Rama Raya's army either defected to the enemy camp or became deserters by refusing to fight on the side of the "infidel" army. This was apparently motivated by the treacherous Gilani Brothers who were among Rama Raya's trusted commanders. There are varying versions of this slice of the battle but constraints of space don't permit discussing this aspect in any detail.

Faced with this kind of multi-pronged assault, panic struck Rama Raya when he realised that there was no force defending his right flank. Some historians aver that this was because he was unaware of Tirumala Raya's flight away from the battle.

Meanwhile, a lowly officer (havaldar) named Rumi Khan fired two canons at the Vijayanagar force, taking a heavy toll and scattering the soldiers. He then climbed up his elephant and charged at Rama Raya's elephant. In the ensuing fight, Rama Raya's bodyguard was killed and the 90-year old head of the Empire fell down from his palanquin, wounded. He was surrounded by enemy soldiers who didn't know who he was including Rumi Khan who had toppled Rama Raya's elephant.

But the game was given away when the Brahmin Dalapatiraya yelled, "Stop! Don't you dare harm Rama Raya!"

And just like that, Rumi Khan realised that his hour of triumph was etched in these words. With all the contempt he could muster, Rumi Khan had Rama Raya lifted by the trunk of his elephant and presented him before Nizam Shah. The Sultan, in a bid to humiliate Rama Raya, offered him a seat and mocked, "All well?"

The nonagenarian said nothing; he merely touched his forehead (indicating that fate had reduced him to this). At this point, the court physician Hakim Kasim Baig stormed into the tent and said, "What are you doing! Exchanging pleasantries with a captured prisoner? Kill him now! If the Bijapur Sultan comes here, he will spare him."

Nizam Shah immediately chopped off Rama Raya's head, affixed it to the tip of a spear and had it paraded outside. It is said that Rama Raya's severed head was thrown in a gutter in Bijapur; other accounts hold that it was sent to Kashi.

The sight of the slain Raya's head propelled a full-blown retreat of the Vijayanagara army. However, they were unable to flee very far. The morale of the Muslim army which had redoubled after Rama Raya's death now reached a feverish heat of murderous passion when it spotted the Hindu army retreating. The warriors of Islam chased them and slaughtered everyone in sight. An area spanning about twenty miles was littered with dead bodies, the earth bloody. The victorious soldiers of Islam took untold riches in the form of coins, jewellery and slaves: both male and female.

One account says that it took twelve days to count the dead bodies that lay in the region from "Ali Kandi" to Vijayanagara and estimates the number of people killed as Ten Lakh.

Hampi Reduced to a Wasteland

The Sultans thanked Allah for this grand victory and remained at the scene of the battle for twenty days. Once the battle wounds had healed, they marched to Hampi vowing vengeance. They decimated the tall, grand buildings, temples, expansive houses with their equally vast private gardens that housed animals and exquisite birds, and burned everything in sight and plundered Vijayanagara's wealth with unimpeded abandon. Perhaps for the first time in its history, South India witnessed the savage and thorough extent of the practice and ultimate success of Jihad.

In the six months that the Bahamani coalition was camped in Vijayanagara, every single house, temple, building and habitation "in a radius spanning twenty leagues was burned down."

The grand civilisation of Hampi was reduced to a wasteland. Even today, it is known by the tragic Kannada moniker, *Haalu Hampi* (Ruined Hampi). And this is how Hampi was reduced from being the global centre of awesome wealth and refined culture to merely becoming a tourist spot.

Hindus of South India never recovered from this mortal blow.

The glory that was scripted by the *Tapas* (penance) of Maharshi Vidyaranya and ably executed by the intrepid gallantry of Harihara, Bukka and Kumara Kampana's exploits culminated more than two hundred years later in the sweeping desolation of Hampi. The cataclysm of Hampi is the eternal warning of the deep and fundamental values of culture and civilisation, of history, of reason, of common sense, and of the stupor induced by prosperity.

And this is the *warning* that Hampi will tell every “tourist” who will pause and listen to that cautionary voice behind this desolation.

Notes

1. South India and Her Muhammadan Invaders: Dr S Krishnaswamy Aiyangar
2. A History of South India: Nilakanta Sastri
3. Foundation of Vijayanagar: Dr S Krishnaswamy Aiyangar
4. Madhuravijayam (Sanskrit): Gangadevi
5. A Forgotten Empire: Robert Sewell
6. Never to be Forgotten Empire: Suryanarain Row
7. Talikote Yuddhada Hinnele (Kannada): Dr S Srikanta Sastri

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7

The Taj Mahal is a Despot's Wasteful Monument to a Woman. It also Stands for Hindu Cultural Amnesia

For the longest time, the Taj Mahal has been given attention disproportionate to its artistry or utility. It also offers an illusion of romance and love.

* * *

Without doubt, the Taj Mahal represents a bigoted despot's monument to a woman who he treated slightly better than as a sex machine. But we get ahead of ourselves. And it is not just the Taj Mahal, the building, but the mind set and the nature that characterises and subserves almost every single construction built by Muslim sultans and nawabs. The late V S Naipaul elucidates this mind set the best:

> …**the very grandeur of the Mogul buildings is oppressive**. Europe has its monuments of sun-kings, its Louvres and its Versailles. But they are part of the development of a country's spirit; they express the refining of a nation's sensibility; they add to the common, growing stock. **In India these endless mosques and rhetorical mausolea, these great palaces speak only of a personal plunder and for a country with an infinite capacity for being plundered**. **The Mogul owned everything in his dominions; and this is the message of the Mogul architecture**. I know only one building in England with this quality of dead-end personal extravagance…the Blenheim. Imagine England as a country of Blenheims, continually built, destroyed and rebuilt over five hundred years, each a gift of the nation and seldom for services rendered…leaving at the end no vigorous nation…no principle beyond that of personal despotism. The **Taj Mahal is exquisite…But in India it is a building wastefully without function; it is only a despot's monument to a woman**, not of India, who bore a child every year for fifteen years. It took twenty-two years to build; and the guide will tell you how many millions it cost. [V S Naipaul: *The Indian Trilogy*. Emphases added]

To be generous, the Taj Mahal offers a cruel illusion of romance. To the Indian spirit and ethos, romance, love and other tender emotions are living, throbbing springs of life and not something that requires a monument built for the dead. The Indian spirit builds a Brindavana with life-giving Tulasi. To this spirit, building an expensive graveyard using the blood, sweat and tears of thousands of nameless, faceless and

unacknowledged slaves is not only revolting, it’s a crime against the divine within.

But some more notable Shahjahanesque exhibits before we proceed further. From the horse’s own mouth. [Emphases added]

Exhibit 1: Circa 1633 CE

It had been brought to the notice of His Majesty [Shah Jahan] that during the late reign many idol temples had been begun, but remained unfinished at **Benares, the great stronghold of infidelism**. The infidels were now desirous of completing them. His Majesty, the defender of the faith, gave orders that at Benares, and throughout all his dominions in every place, all temples that had been begun should be cast down. It was now reported from **the province of Allahabad that 76 temples had been destroyed…** [*Badshahnama*: Abdul Hamid Lahori]

Exhibit 2: Circa 1635 CE

Shah Jahan's soldiers captured some ladies of the royal Bundela family after Jujhar Singh and his sons failed to kill them in the time-honoured Rajput tradition. In the words of Jadunath Sarkar, Mothers and daughters of kings, they were robbed of their religion and forced to lead the infamous life of the Mughal harem. **Shah Jahan himself made a triumphal entry into Orchha, the capital of the Bundelas, demolished the lofty and massive temple of Bir Singh Dev, and raised a mosque in its place**. [*The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India:* Sita Ram Goel]

Exhibit 3: Location-wise list of Hindu Temples Destroyed by Shahjahan

- **Udaypur (Madhya Pradesh)**: Two mosques built after destroying temples
- **Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh):** Shãh Jahãni Masjid (1650–51) built after destroying a Hindu temple
- **Asirgarh (West Nimar district, Madhya Pradesh)**: Masjid built in the reign of Shãh Jahãn after pulling down a temple.
- **Nagaur (Rajasthan)**: Shãh Jahãnî Masjid at Surajpole after converting a temple into a mosque
- **Asla (Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh)**: Shãh Jahãnî Masjid built after demolishing a temple. *[Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them: Volume 1: Edited by Sita Ram Goel]*

More extensive and comprehensive exhibits of the foregoing sort is available in *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them: Volume II*. And this is apart from Shahjahan's reintroduction of the extortionist pilgrimage tax on Hindus, prohibition against Hindus rebuilding their destroyed or damaged temples, making apostasy a crime punishable by death, incentivising Hindus to convert to Islam, and his attempted persecution of the great Sikh Guru **Hargobind Singh**.

Unsurprisingly, Shahjahan followed the same definitive trajectory of almost all Muslim despots who imposed their tyranny from Delhi: rebelling against or overthrowing their respective biological fathers or benefactors. From Ala-ud-din Khilji who backstabbed his own uncle to Muhammad Bin Tughlaq who staged his father's murder to Jahangir who

unsuccessfully rebelled against Akbar, and to the selfsame Shahjahan who followed his father **Jahangir's** footsteps only to meet the same fate at the hands of his ultra-bigoted son, Aurangzeb**.** This ungrateful phenomenon applies equally to various Nawabs, and petty Muslim chieftains alike.

Despite this unflattering record, all that the Taj Mahal-worshippers, the present-day history-denying distortionists can detect is the "sublime," "poetic," (insert your preferred adjective here) and eternal love story between Shahjahan and Mumtaz Mahal. It is one thing to admire the Taj Mahal for its architecture but an entirely different thing to qualify it with such epithets which not only suppresses the truth about this tyrant but heaps untold humiliation upon the memories of the abundant Hindu victims of his multifaceted tyranny.

It's not the Taj Mahal but the mindset of these distortionists that's the Eighth Wonder of the world. It's almost as if these eminences have an incurable carnal lust for unmitigated tyrants and imperial debauches like Shah Jahan. The crueller the despot, the greater the lust. Latest case in point: the newly-minted Redeemer of Aurangzeb's Savagery: **Audrey Truschke**.

Of the female of this garden-weed species, of the "my body, my womb, my life" Feminist-Bible-thumpers, one only needs to ask this question: **would any one among them be willing to take the place of Mumtaz Mahal?** She who was betrothed at 13, married at 19 as the fourth wife following which Shahjahan married more women, bringing the grand total to seven wives apart from the uncountable number of concubines and females he acquired as booty. She whose incredibly fecund womb bore him fourteen children. She who died after delivering the fourteenth child.

The aforementioned love for Taj Mahal and the fake halo around the Shah Jahan-Mumtaz "immortal love story" also counts as one of the greatest successes of the Communist brainwashing of at least three entire generations of Indians—mostly Hindus. In an eerie, living, ongoing nightmare of inventing and peddling totalitarian history-writing, this success has been truly unparalleled. To the extent that these generations think that history is either a waste of time or that plunderers and tyrants like Mahmud Ghazni, Shahjahan, Aurangzeb, et al are irrelevant today. Which is entirely consonant with a key Communist goal: *memory is a crime against history.*

This rings alarmingly true when we contrast this mindless glorification of the Taj Mahal**,** the *dargah* at Ajmer and numerous similar Islamic monuments that are zealously protected with the hundreds of grand temples, monuments, and sculptural and architectural marvels of Hindu creativity and accomplishment.

This contrast, nay, this *disparity* becomes starker when we notice two key factors:

1. For instance, places like the Ajmer *dargah* are living sites—the visitor whether a Muslim or no, must show reverence. On the other hand, it is common to spot even Hindus wearing footwear at say, the Kailasanatha and numerous other Hindu temples. *These sites have been effectively de-sanctified in the Hindu cultural and civilisational consciousness and are now mere tourist spots*.
2. The wealthier (read: tourist revenue) among these Hindu sites are *still* poorly (at any rate, inadequately) maintained while nobody knows what happens to that revenue.

And so, we have it right there: the lopsided historical narrative of India literally on stone. Yet, Hindus have travelled so far on the road to civilisational amnesia that vital, *physical* signs like these staring them openly in the face hardly seems to bother them.

While we're on this, it's also interesting to talk to Government-appointed tourist guides at sites that were victims of Islamic vandalism. Here's a sample of what you will hear for example, in Chittorgarh: "here's where the **Rajput** women committed **Jauhar**." Ask the guide "why?" He'll merely say "to save their honour." Ask further, "from whom?" Silence.

It's *this* that anybody who cares for this country's heritage should be really worried about.

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8

The Brilliant Battle of Nijagal: How the Mere Chieftain Madakari Nayaka Pounded Hyder Ali

A quick trip down to a little known but brilliant battle fought in the 18th century near Bangalore

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South India in the latter half of the 18th Century resembled a mobile dance-drama troupe of incessant warfare among the dominant powers of the English East India Company, the Marathas and the Muslim usurper of the ancient Mysore Kingdom, Hyder Ali who was supported by the French.

When we arrive at the timeline of our story, the Maratha Empire had long since transitioned into the hands of the Peshwas after the end of Shivaji's short-lived dynasty. A few decades later, it had received a fatal

blow in Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, losing vast swathes of territory, wealth, and prestige, and began an irreversible descent which in turn was hastened by internal strife. Yet, its ambition remains as strong and as unquenchable.

At this juncture, **Shreemant Peshwa** or **Madhava Rao Peshwa I** ascended the imperial Maratha throne and fastidiously began to reassert the Empire's shattered prestige and prowess. In February 1762, he embarked on a twofold mission of sorts: first, to conquer Mysore from the usurper **Hyder Ali** and next, to wrest the Hyderabad Nizam's dominions.

The Maratha army under his leadership began an unstoppable, whirlwind expedition to wipe out Hyder Ali. Beginning with Adoni, Madhava Rao stormed Bellary, Kurnool, Devadurga, Rayadurga, Kolar, Bhairavgad, Devarayanadurga, and reached the nearby hill-fort of **Nijagal** near Tumkur, about 60 kilometres from Bangalore. Madhava Rao's final destination was Srirangapattana, Hyder Ali's capital.

The Impregnable Nijagal Fort

The Nijagal fort was built on the summit of a steep, craggy hill and resembled a massive, treacherous embrace of boulder. It was intimidatingly decorated in all directions with gigantic, slippery boulders jutting out and effectively sealing it off from assault. The altitude of the fort was beyond the reach of cannon fire. Physical scaling of the fort was near impossible—any such attempt would be met with a sudden flood of boiling oil and water and excreta from specially-constructed holes peeping from the *burj* or *bateri* (an oval-shaped construction made of stone, sand and mortar and serving as a watch tower and assault point), which had military guards patrolling round the clock. A large, deep and wide fosse circumscribed the base of the mountain and was filled with thorns. The moat at the base of the mountain was home to a generous swarm of crocodiles, yet another layer of security.

More importantly, Nijagal was never in the danger of running out of water. Three freshwater mountain streams named *Rasa Siddara Doni* (Doni= pond), *Kanchina Doni* (Brass pond), and Akka-Tangira Doni (Sisters' pond)–provided ample water supply.

Nijagal was also a secondary gateway of sorts to the northern frontiers of Hyder Ali's kingdom. It lay strategically between Sira—for long an administrative *Suba* of the erstwhile Mughal Empire—and Mysore.

As weeks turned to months, the siege of Nijagal became a question of Madhava Rao's personal and military eminence. More critically, it was also a matter of survival for Hyder Ali whose morale like his treasury at that point was almost barren. He had recently suffered unexpected and

repeated thrashings and humiliations in the battlefield. En route to his usurpation of the Mysore throne, he had splashed money like water, bribing and paying enormous sums to various parties who had offered their support to his unscrupulous ambition. At this point, Hyder could trust no one and his stress had pushed him into a desolate sanctuary just outside his palace at Srirangapattana.

This vulnerability coupled with the confidence emanating from serial victories elsewhere, had solidified Madhava Rao's decision to attack Hyder Ali. However, none these earlier victories in far stormier battles had prepared him for Nijagal.

Madhava Rao's siege of the Nijagal fort lasted two months at the end of which he was thoroughly frustrated. Neither was his own condition getting any better. In fact, his ammunition and supplies were dangerously low.

At the time, the Nijagal fort was commanded by Sardar Khan, Hyder Ali's vassal. A ruthless ruler, Sardar Khan, like most Muslim chieftains, had mercilessly stripped the region through extortionate taxation and had hoarded enormous wealth in the form of both money and supplies enough to last him for two years.

Enter Madakari Nayaka

It was then that Madhava Rao I requested Madakari Nayaka the *Palegar* (Chieftain) of Chitradurga, for aid. The history of Chitradurga is the stuff of romantic, warrior-legends and few if any, have immortalised it with the passion, warmth, and intimacy of the late Kannada writer, T.R. Subba Rao.

Madakari Nayaka agreed, and en route to Nijagal, he was moved by the remorseless rape of the entire region that spanned over a hundred kilometers.

When he reached Nijagal, Madakari Nayaka quickly reconnoitred the surroundings. His first break came when he discovered that the fort had two entrances for people to move into the town and back. These were the heavily-guarded northern and eastern entrances. An assault plan began to take shape in his mind.

Because it was impossible to physically scale the fort during daytime without incurring substantial causalities, he decided to scale it at night. But then his army regulars were ill-trained for the task. Madakari Nayaka's knowledge of the layout of the fort had also equipped him with the foresight to marshal great numbers of his loyal and special hunter-force that he had selected for the mission.

Indeed, the Nayakas (or Palegars) of Chitradurga originally descended from the hunter tribes that inhabited the mountainous and densely-thicketed regions of Chitradurga. Despite becoming sovereigns in later years, they never lost touch with their roots. They preserved and nurtured generations of fierce, fearless hunter-warriors for use in special occasions like this. These hunter-warriors were exceptionally trained to instil fear

deep into the enemy’s heart . They used hideous camouflage, emitted blood-curdling war cries by producing an eerie medley of beastly sounds, fought in the most daunting conditions, were expert mountain-climbers and had no fear of death.

The Raw Assault

That night, Madakari Nayaka's hunter-warriors encamped not too far from the base of the fort and made a fire from dried wood. By its light, they gorged on a potent diet of both roasted and raw meat which they gulped down with toddy and smoked marijuana. After dinner, they wrapped thick and coarse rugs around their bodies, dangled a rope made of fibre on their shoulder, and secured a bag comprising Giant Monitor Lizards around their waist.

When they reached the moat, they killed a couple of horses they had brought along, and threw its flesh into the moat to distract the crocodiles. Then they slithered into the moat, swam noiselessly, locking their lips tightly together lest any poison in the water kill them, and climbed up the shore on the other side. Next, they fastened the fibre rope to the feet of the lizards and flung the creatures upon the rocks.

They tugged hard at the rope and once they were confident that lizards' grip was firm, they began a steady, swift, and silent ascent.

After about an hour, Madakari Nayaka's hunter-warriors were waiting in the pregnant darkness outside one of the two doors atop the fort, for their leader's signal. And below, five hundred soldiers comprising the Maratha and Madakari Nayaka's forces had now surrounded the Nijagal fort from all directions.

After timing his response, Madakari Nayaka screamed a shrill battle cry and led the charge from the frontline below. The surprised guards who rushed to open the fort door upon hearing the noise saw the hordes of death tearing towards them.

The coordination was perfect.

Atop, Madakari Nayaka's force of hunter-warriors immediately began colouring the quiet night with a riot of blood and mayhem. With their well-honed bestial yawling, the hunter-warriors pummelled the door open and chopped everybody in their path with their battle axes. They sliced Sardar Khan's soldiers like leaves on a twig.

Madakari Nayaka's lightning onslaught left no chance for Nijagal's defenders to even realise what was happening much less respond to it. Heads and necks and hands and arms and fingers and legs flew. The ill-prepared Sardar Khan's force simply watched itself being butchered indiscriminately. And after they had attained a bloody and decisive foothold, the hunter-warriors opened all other avenues, and it was pretty much effortless for the regular military force to capture the fort.

Nijagal was awash with a perennial flow of fresh enemy blood. While his hunter-warriors were busy slaughtering at will, Madakari Nayaka stormed directly into Sardar Khan's bedroom, violently roused him from sleep, and engaged him in a man-to-man sword fight. It was an unequal contest: Madakari Nayaka was already intoxicated with the high of battle and raring to slay more while Sardar Khan was struggling to shake off his slumber. In one blow, Madakari Nayaka chopped off Sardar Khan's hand, forcing him to surrender. Even as he kneeled down, the question plagued Sardar Khan: how was his impregnable fortress ever breached?

In the morning, Madakari Nayaka delivered Sardar Khan to Madhav Rao I.

Postscript

Hyder Ali's military successes owed to a combination of treachery, bribe, cowardice, sheer unscrupulousness, military prowess, and most of all, luck. When we read his blood-soaked biography and visualise the conditions and life of that period, we find it inconceivable that this unlettered mercenary for hire actually usurped political power in Mysore and declared himself the sultan. Luck served him a lion's share.

The defeat at Nijagal marked one of the lowest ebbs in his military career. However, Madhav Rao I died of tuberculosis a short period after he won Nijagal. The Maratha Empire that had sputtered to some kind of revival immediately relapsed into internal discord giving Hyder Ali enough time and resources to systematically recuperate his losses and resurface as a major power in South India.

But he neither forgot nor forgave Madakari Nayaka, a mere chieftain who had mounted this colossal humiliation on him. With the entire might of his army, Hyder Ali attacked Chitradurga in 1779, decimated it, and put an end to the glorious Nayaka Dynasty that had protected it for so long.

The full story of this tragic decimation of Chitradurga is the subject of T.R. Subba Rao's magnum opus, *Durgastamana*, a historical classic to which I am indebted for much of the source material.

* * *

9

The Forgotten Genocide of Hindus in Kohat in 1924

Revisiting an extremely painful chapter in the prolonged history of Hindu genocides in their own land

* * *

At the outset, let's examine three quotes.

Quote 1

On the whole, **violence is sanctified in Islam if it is carried out against infidels or heretics 'in the path of Allah.'** *On the philosophic religious level, there is no room for nonbelievers in the Islamic system, even if minorities are temporarily tolerated.* **The faithful live, at least in theory, in a permanent state of war with the non-Islamic world**, *and this will change only if and when the*

> *nonbelievers have accepted the one true faith…In brief, the Islamic fundamentalist attitude towards violence is that the final aim justifies the means.*

That was the late Walter Laqueur in his brilliant work, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*. Emphasis added.

Quote 2

> *[if the British left India], then the rule of India would pass into the hands of that community which is nearly four times as large as ourselves … Then, our life, our property, our honor, and our faith will all be in great danger. …* **woe betide the time when we become the subjects of our neighbors, and answer to them for the sins, real or imaginary of Aurangzeb… and other Mussalman conquerors and rulers who went before him**. [Emphasis added]

That was Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk Kamboh alias Mushtaq Hussain Zuberi, one of the founders of the All India Muslim League along with that other fanatic, Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka. Mushtaq Hussain's words are direct and unambiguous. They also formed the foundational *raison d'être* for the All India Muslim League. The attentive reader will notice the intricate and inextricable link between Quote 1, which is the inspiration for and guiding force behind Quote 2.

What did Mushtaq Hussain's words translate themselves into in the impenetrable intellectual abyss called Jawaharlal Nehru's mind? Let's read his own words.

Quote 3

> *Communalism of the majority is far more dangerous than communalism of the minority…* When the minority communities are communal, you can see that and understand it. *But the communalism of a majority community is apt to be taken for nationalism.*

Let us spell it out: Jawaharlal Nehru emphatically endorsed the rabid Mushtaq Hussain (and several others of his ilk) decades later, by concocting an unofficial political religion called secularism, which neither had a concrete definition nor *the sanction of popular will*.

* * *

But Nehruvian secularism was precisely what the vestiges of the bigoted, separatist forces that remained in India after partition wanted. Secularism was that exact gift that helped the fanatical *Ulema* in India to lie low for a while and use time and patience to regroup, re-strengthen, and create another Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Almost the entire Muslim community underwent a massive sense of collective guilt thanks to Partition. There is a fundamental reason why Muslim actors and artists in Hindi cinema adopted Hindu names: remember Muhammad Yusuf Khan? Hamid Ali Khan? Mumtaz Jehan Begum Dehlavi? Mahjabeen Bano? They are respectively, Dilip Kumar, Ajit, Madhubala, and Meena Kumari. From that era to the steady but sure transformation and near-total takeover of

Bollywood by Dawood Ibrahim, there is a direct parallel to the dominance of secularism in Indian politics and public discourse.

Blame-Hindus Cottage Industry

The contemporary equivalent of Mohammad Ali Jinnah in many ways is Asaduddin Owaisi. As the history of the last seven decades shows, these forces used the selfsame secularism with much more skill and finesse than Muhammed Ali Jinnah. In “independent” India, these forces were also effectively aided and abetted by Communists, now masquerading as Liberals. One of the signal services that these Liberal traitors have rendered to the Jihadi forces is the whitewashing of bigoted mass murderers like Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan.

But what *else* did secularism get us in these seven decades? The two-word answer: communal riots. Here is a topic for a Phd thesis: *there is a direct correlation between secularism* (as practiced in India under successive Congress regimes) *and communal riots*. It is an open secret that the maximum number of communal riots—euphemism for unprovoked Muslim aggression against Hindus who generally mind their own business peacefully—happened under the protracted Congress rule. A painstaking study undertaken by RNP Singh shows that *a staggering 8175 communal riots occurred between 1950 to June 1992*.

The invariable outcome in the aftermath of these riots: blaming Hindus for a variety of reasons, mostly imaginary and concocted but always ideologically motivated. Over a period of six decades, Blame-Hindus became a flourishing cottage industry which peaked during the 2002 Gujarat riots. Here is how the indomitable Koenraad Elst describes this industry:

These days, much-acclaimed characters like John Dayal, Harsh Mander and Arundhati Roy lie in waiting for communal riots and elatedly jump at them when and where they erupt. They exploit the anti-Hindu propaganda value of riots to the hilt, making up fictional stories as they go along to compensate for any defects in the true account. John Dayal is welcomed to Congressional committees in Washington DC as a crown witness to canards such as how Hindus are raping Catholic nuns in India, an allegation long refuted in a report by the Congress state government of Madhya Pradesh. Arundhati Roy goes lyrical about the torture of a Muslim politician's two daughters by Hindus during the Gujarat riots of 2002, even when the man had only one daughter.

A History of the Depopulation and Displacement of Hindus

What is even worse is that in a majority of these cases where the rioting Muslim mobs have prevailed, hundreds and thousands of Hindu survivors of the riots have been displaced wholesale, never to return to their ancestral lands and homes where their families have lived for several generations.

One of the cardinal features that kept the Sanatana civilisation unbroken for centuries was a sense of permanence of dwelling. The original Sanatana village was not only smallest unit of administration since time immemorial, it was also self-contained in almost all matters. It was rare for a villager to step out of his village except for say, attending functions, festivals, and going on a *Yatra.* But this was rudely, cruelly disrupted forever thanks to waves upon waves of Muslim invasions and raids spread over several centuries. It is estimated that throughout Northern and Eastern India, there is only one village near Hissar in Haryana, which can trace its antiquity to just 600 years. The forced migrations of millions of Hindus from their original homes to various parts of India ideally forms the subject for an independent study. This is a historical study of more than a thousand years. The interested student will find such a study highly rewarding.

But what has changed since that era of Jihad-fuelled rampaging Muslim armies who could loot, pillage, plunder, raze, burn, conquer, and subjugate at will, and “Independent,” democratic India? Just the outer garb. Fundamentally nothing has changed. The said historical conquests

have today become localised. And acquired an additional strength thanks to seventy years of secularism.

Today, forget hearing the heart-rending stories of the displaced Hindus, the vile nature of our Jihad-loving, Left-Liberal, Congress-sponsored public discourse has ensured that *these Hindus didn't even exist to begin with.* Ask this question, for example: have you read even *one* news report of even *one* Hindu victim of the Gujarat riots and the spark that ignited it: the macabre burning alive of 57 hapless *Kar Sevaks* in the ill-fated Sabarmati Express?

This was the secularism that was in danger for example, when the Babri Masjid demolished, when the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and other Hindu organisations began reasserting themselves, and most recently, when Narendra Modi conclusively trashed it in the dustbin of history.

More recently, thanks to the abrogation of Article 370, all the beef-coated layers of lard have melted to reveal the true definition of secularism: an incurable lust for Pakistan.

Precursors to the Kohat Hindu Genocide

One such forgotten and long-buried incident of the genocide and mass displacement of Hindus is the infamous Kohat massacre of Hindus circa September 1924. Carried out over three full days of appalling, brutal intensity against—as always—unprepared Hindus and Sikhs. Lambs for wanton slaughter. Such was the raw savagery of the Muslim mobs that it shook even the British who so skilfully hid and whitewashed their own colonial savagery.

The Kohat genocide of Hindus also prompted Mohandas Gandhi to undertake a 21-day fast protesting this horror. No wonder that craven Gandhi-worshippers and alleged biographers like Ramachandra Guha carefully omit such key milestones in Mohandas Gandhi's career. For Guha and his ilk, the life of a Hindu only has value when he or she is killed and used as fuel to keep the blaze of the Blame-Hindu Cottage Industry aflame.

But the story of the Kohat Genocide of Hindus begins about a year earlier, that is, 1923. In a Jamait-ul-Ulema Conference held in Kakinada on 29 December 1923. The conference heralded a short-lived but heinous era of communal riots from 1923-26. The Kohat Genocide of Hindus was perhaps the most savage of them all.

Today, Kohat is part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly, the North-West Frontier Province) in Pakistan. It is just 300 Kms from Srinagar and about 750 Kms from Delhi. Barely a century ago, it had a significant population of Hindus and Sikhs.

Swami Shraddhananda's Success Alarms the Ulema

One of the outstanding services rendered by Swami Dayananda Saraswati to the Hindu society was to devise the simple but highly effective *Shuddhi* (purification) movement. In his own time, it was both a courageous and a noble thing to do: of bringing forcibly converted Hindus back to their ancestral Dharma. Today, this is variously known as *Ghar Wapsi* (homecoming). Initially, the *Shuddhi* movement met with significant success. However, the Swamiji had seriously underestimated the death-like chokehold that the *Ulema* had over the Muslim community.

After Swami Dayananda Saraswati's death in 1883, his work was carried on with greater fervour and intensity by his worthy disciple, Swami Shraddhananda, who was alarmed at the blunders of Mohandas Gandhi courting the Islamic bigot-brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Swami Shraddhananda neither needed nor cared for Gandhi's *Hindu-Muslim bhai bhai* certificate. A measure of Swami Shraddhananda's impact is in the fact that his efforts to reconvert the Malkana Rajputs to Hinduism met with very good success. The Malkana Rajputs had been eager to return to their ancestral Dharma for a long time but all they needed was the reassurance of safety and proper leadership. Swami Shraddhananda provided both.

By 1923, the Muslim Ulema was rattled so much that they decided to take urgent, drastic measures. In mid 1923, the Muslim leadership launched the Tanzeem and Tabligh movements "in order to organise the Muslims as a virile community."

Swami Shraddhananda hit back immediately. He launched the *Sanghatan* (mobilisation/organisation) movement as a counter to this. One of the simultaneous developments that the *Shuddhi* movement spawned was the reinvigoration of the "physical culture" or the spirit of Kshatra among the Hindus. Gymnasiums, wrestling Akhadas, and martial arts training centres sprang up all over North and North-West India. This further spooked the Tablighis, especially. Swami Shraddhananda's undaunted courage and leadership met with widespread support from wealthy Hindu Zamindars who in turn acted as his brand ambassadors and reconverted hundreds of Muslims back to Sanatana Dharma.

It was also the beginning of the boil. Here's how Muhammad Ali described it:

> *I frankly confess it is on such occasions that **I sigh for the days when our forefathers settled things by cutting heads rather than counting them.***

R.C. Majumdar's analysis is as honest as it is blunt:

> *The Hindus naturally resented the attitude of the Muslims toward the Shuddi movement and felt…perfectly justified in…reconverting others to their own faith – **a right which the Muslims had fully exercised all along without any restraint, and which alone accounted for their number in India**.*

First Blood

In May 1923, a Muslim mob attacked an Arya Samaj procession which passed by a mosque in Calcutta. The reason? Hindu “religious music” was being played. That of course, hurt the Muslim sentiments. This escalated into a bloody riot that lasted several days with heavy causalities on both sides. The Sanatana spirit didn’t buckle or cower down.

The Muslim *Ulema* could take it no longer.

On 29 December, 1923, it convened the Jamait-ul-Ulema Conference at Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. The President of the conference denounced the *Shuddhi* movement as “the worst enemies of India,” and declared that “the *Sanghatan* movement would prove detrimental to the cause of the” Muslim advancement in India. The stage was set but the real carnage would come later.

15 July 1924. *Eid-al-Adha* or *Bakrid*.

Delhi.

Some Muslim butchers forcibly dragged a cow through a road in a Hindu locality to the slaughterhouse. The British Government had explicitly shut the road by order fearing trouble on this “holy” festival day. Quite obviously, this led to rioting. Although the British resorted to firing to quell the violence, damage had already been done: by then, the Muslim butchers had already massacred 12 Hindus and seriously wounded about a hundred. The panicked Hindu community shut their shops and homes for the next several days. But the attacks didn’t stop. Sporadic assaults were launched by Moslem goondas on stray passers-by, who happened to be Hindus, and in the next few days, even a Hindu temple was desecrated.

It appears that the Bakrid of 1924 was indeed a special occasion for large-scale Hindu bloodletting. Apart from Delhi, Muslims unleashed violence against Hindus in such diverse cities as Nagpur, Jabalpur, Berar, and scores of smaller towns and villages. The same story everywhere.

> *On the Bakrid day smaller disturbances also occurred at several places, the cause of the trouble being the same everywhere; the Moslems must kill a cow for sacrifice and Hindus would not allow that. Some of the bigger street-fightings took place in Nagpur, Jubbulpore and other places in the C. P. [Central Provinces. Now Madhya Pradesh] and Berar.*

But the worst of all was Gulbarga. In this case, it was the festival of Muharram.

The Horror at Gulbarga

Back then, Gulbarga was ruled by the Nizam of Hyderabad. On this occasion, the Nizam gave unbridled license to his “Muhammadan mobs” who “attacked all the temples in [Gulbarga], numbering about fifteen, and broke the idols.” But their blood-thirst wasn’t sated yet. They raided the ancient and holy Sharana Vishweshwara Temple and attempted to set fire to the temple’s Ratha (chariot). The intensity of this violent bigotry was not quelled even by police firing which killed a few of these Jihadis. They backed off only to return the next day. Here’s what happened:

> *Next morning, the streets were again in the hands of Muhammadan mobs and considerable damage was done to Hindu houses and shops…the Muslim mob fury was at its height and almost all the temples within the range of the mob, some fifty in number, were desecrated, their sanctum sanctorum entered into, their idols broken, and their buildings damaged.*

News of this wanton temple destruction and Hindu slaughter spread like wildfire throughout India. While Hindus were seething with rage and grieving with agony, the Muslim leadership took Gulbarga as an inspiration.

Their next target: the selfsame Kohat in the North-Western Frontier Province. Now in Pakistan. As always, Hindus remained blissfully unaware, unprepared.

A Brief History of Kohat

The earliest recorded history of Kohat traces its founder to a Buddhist king named Raja Kohat. Today, the only surviving traces of Kohat's remote Buddhist past is a road carved into the hill to the north of the Muhammadzai village, about eight kilometres to the west of Kohat; that, and the ruined Adh-i-Samut fort named after another Buddhist king, Adh. After a lull of several centuries, we hear Kohat again, mentioned in barbarian Babur's *Baburnama*. Like scores of similar alien Muslim invaders, he proudly mentions how he invaded, destroyed and plundered Kohat after first capturing Purushapura (Peshawar) in 1505 CE. The next significant mention of Kohat occurs in the mid 18th century when the short-lived but brutal Durrani Empire conquered it.

Next, the lionlike Maharaja Ranjit Singh wrested it from Pir Muhammad in 1834. The debt of gratitude that Sanatana civilisation owes to Lion Ranjit Singh is incalculable when we recall the fact that he reconquered and reestablished Sanatana civilisation all the way in the badlands of Afghanistan after nearly five hundred years of uninterrupted Muslim rule! Unfortunately, Ranjit Singh's vast empire crumbled after his demise and by 1849, Kohat passed into British hands.

A Paltry Six Percent of Hindus

Fast forward seventy-five years to 1924. The Hindus formed a measly six percent of Kohat's total population. The remaining population was entirely Muslim. But Kohat's Hindus of those days were made of sturdier stuff unlike the Hindus of today who blindly chant *Ishwar=Allah, Meera=Mary, Krishna=Christ* and similar dangerous nonsense. As long as Ranjit Singh was alive, as long as the indomitable Sikh force guarded Kohat, both Hindus and Sikhs were safe in Kohat. And the courage he had instilled in them had deep, powerful roots.

After Ranjit Singh's death and the British takeover, the Hindus of Kohat had to face on a daily basis what the Hindus of Pakistan continue to face since 1947: forced conversions to Islam, depopulation, abduction and rape of women and young girls. But the Hindus of Kohat did not give up, did not convert, did not abandon their ancestral *Karma Bhoomi*. They formed the *Sanatan Dharma Sabha*, registered at Kohat, to safeguard and preserve their Dharma.

September 9, 1924 would savagely change that.

Sometime in August 1924, a local "Moslem news-sheet" published an "offensive anti-Hindu poem." Jiwan Das, the Secretary of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha retorted by distributing "a pamphlet which was calculated to wound Muslim religious susceptibilities." But the Hindu community quickly realised what they were up against: how do you beat the odds of 6 to 94? So, on 2 September 1924, they passed a resolution requesting pardon.

This was precisely what the Muslim leadership wanted. The apology was seen as a sign of weakness on the part of the Hindus.

And so, the fanatical Maulvi Ahmad Gul approached the Superintendent of Police and threatened "consequences." Jiwan Das was arrested and had to stay in custody before he could pay up a bond of ₹ 10,000 (in those days). On 8 September, Jiwan Das was released on bail.

The Muslim leadership was now completely incensed.

The local mosque instantly swung into action. It drummed up the Faithful in thousands and to cut a long story short, an oath of *Talaq* was taken by this rabid collective. Here's how it read:

> *[the Muslims] solemnly decided that they would either die next morning or arrive at some decision; that their wives stood divorced to them, and that they would not be afraid of death or imprisonment. This particular oath-taking had a very sinister meaning amongst the frontier people…*

Here is what happened next:

> *On the 9th a crowd of about 1,500 men came in an ugly mood to interview the Deputy Commissioner, and seeing that crowd he and the Superintendent of Police made arrangements to post the entire available force of the City Police in the streets…*

Unprecedented Muslim Savagery against a Helpless Minority

But the Kohat Hindus had read the lethal writing on the wall even before the cops could act. After all, they had generational experience in such matters, dating back to hundreds of years. Even as the police force was frantically trying to erect preventive measures, the rabid Muslim mobs had already struck. Let's hear it from R.C. Majumdar.

> *On the morning of 9 September, 1924, the Muslims looted and burnt all the shops of the Hindus. On the night of 10 September the Muslims made a number of breaches in the mud walls of the city, and committed wholesale plunder and incendiarism…Before noon, there were widespread fires in Hindu quarters.*

The scale, intensity, and extent of Muslim mob violence in Kohat was so unprecedented and incomparable to anything that had happened in the past that it shook even the imperial British Government. The Kohat Deputy Commissioner and Brigade Commander almost gave up citing helplessness against this level of determined mob barbarism. This is how Mohandas Gandhi described the Muslim genocide of Hindus:

> *The Muslim fury knew no bounds. Destruction of life and property, in which the Constabulary freely partook…was general…Even the Khilafat volunteers, whose duty it was to protect the Hindus, and regard them as their own kith and kin, neglected their duty, and not only joined in the loot but also took part in the previous incitement.*

It was the first ever genocide of Hindus on this scale. All Hindu and Sikh shops and establishments and homes were destroyed and burnt. Temples and Gurudwaras were desecrated, the Murtis vandalized and wrecked. It was a bloodbath that left more than a thousand Hindu and Sikh dead bodies in its wake.

This was followed by what always follows any massacre of Hindus: mass exodus and depopulation of the geography of Hindus. The local authorities escorted the surviving Hindus and Sikhs first to the cantonment and then sent them off to Rawalpindi “apprehending that there was a grave danger of wholesale slaughter of Hindus.”

That was the entire Hindu and Sikh population of Kohat: about 3500 people not counting the slain.

They never returned to Kohat.

Guess where Rawalpindi is today?

The Motilal Nehru - Mohandas Gandhi - Jawaharlal Nehru Unholy Trio

If the Kohat Genocide of Hindus was macabre, what followed it was perverse. It was political and communal necrophilia committed shamelessly by the Father–Son–Holy Ghost trio on the dead bodies of these unfortunate Kohat Hindus.

Let's first consider the Holy Ghost, alias Mohandas Gandhi who had by 1924, become the unchallengeable dictator of the Indian National Congress. As a student of history, the more one studies, the more the conviction grows that there was only one *man* in the Indian National Congress who could mock, scold, and challenge Gandhi: Sarojini Naidu. Here's how she admonished him for Kohat in a letter:

> *Nothing is likely to be achieved by lecturing on or teaching about peace. You should take some effective steps to stop the riot.*

Gandhi was indeed ashamed. But what did he do to atone for it? He declared to Sarojini Naidu:

> *I must find out an effective remedy…had I not been instrumental in bringing into being the vast energy of the people? I must find a remedy if the energy proved self destructive.*

We can almost touch Gandhi's self-righteous egomania in these words. But more importantly, we must note that *there is not a single word of*

condemnation of the Muslim fanaticism that led to the Kohat Hindu Genocide!

What was Gandhi's "remedy?" He announced a 21-day fast starting on 17 September 1924. And where did he start this fast? At the sprawling home of the selfsame Muhammad Ali of the bigoted brothers of the Khilafat infamy. All it took was just four days to show the world that it was a farce not a fast. Let's read R.C. Majumdar again:

> *How far Gandhi's fast had any salutary effect on the communal relations may be judged by the fact that four days after Gandhi began his fast there was a serious communal riot at Shahjahanpur in which the military had to intervene and 9 were killed and about 100 injured. On October 8, when Gandhi broke his fast, there were serious communal riots at Allahabad, Kanchrapara near Calcutta, and at Sagar and Jubbulpore in C.P.*

As incident after sickening incident demonstrates, the delusional world of Mohandas Gandhi admitted no illuminating ray of reality.

Next we turn to the Father alias Motilal Nehru. The role he played in gorging over the Hindu dead bodies of Kohat is truly appalling. He moved a resolution in the Congress Party with serpent-tongued sinisterness best described again by R.C. Majumdar:

> *Motilal Nehru [said] : "in Kohat a tragedy has taken place the like of which has not been known in India…" but scrupulously avoided casting any blame on any party, merely observing that "this is not the time for us to apportion the blame upon the parties concerned," though more than three months had passed since the incident. The*

Congress resolution…urged the Musalmans of Kohat to assure their Hindu brethren of full protection of their lives and property and invite them to return, advised the refugees not to return except upon any such invitation, and asked everybody to suspend judgement…"

This is the full story of how Kohat was entirely cleansed of even its meagre Hindu population.

Postscript

The genocide of Hindus at Kohat would eerily repeat itself all over again sixty-five years later in the summer of 1989 in Kashmir. This time, the genocide and forced displacement of Kashmiri Hindus was on an industrial scale. Scripted, produced, directed, and executed with clinical brutality by the state Government in “independent” India. Back then, it was Motilal Nehru who indirectly warned the displaced Kohat Hindus to never return to their ancestral *Karma Bhoomi*. In 1989, it was his great grandson Rajiv Gandhi who inherited the selfsame gene of political necrophilia.

Meanwhile, we wait perhaps in vain that Hindus will learn from history.

Notes

1. Jawaharlal Nehru: Speech at the All India Congress Committee, 1958. Emphasis added.
2. RNP Singh: Riots & Wrongs: Islam and Religious Riots: A Case Study, India First Foundation, 2004
3. Koenraad Elst: Ayodhya, the Finale: Science Versus Secularism in the Excavations Debate, Voice of India, 2003
4. R.C. Majumdar: History of the Freedom Movement, Vol 3, p 274
5. Ibid: p 275
6. Ibid: p 275. Emphasis added.
7. IAR Vol 2, p 25. Emphasis added.
8. Ibid. Emphasis added.
9. Ibid: p 278
10. Ibid
11. IAR: Vol 2, 1924. p 26
12. Ibid
13. Ibid
14. R.C. Majumdar: History of the Freedom Movement, Vol 3, p 279
15. Quoted in Ibid, p 279
16. Quoted in Ibid, p 279
17. RNP Singh: Riots & Wrongs: Islam and Religious Riots: A Case Study, India First Foundation, 2004. p 194
18. Ibid
19. R.C. Majumdar: History of the Freedom Movement, Vol 3, p 283. Emphasis added.

20. Ibid. pp 279-80

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10

The Hindu History of Pakistan is a Loss of Cultural Narrative Memory

It is both a civilisational necessity and imperative for what remains of Bharatavarsha to teach and remember the Hindu history of Pakistan

* * *

ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

Here is the gist of the foregoing timeless sloka from the Ishavasya Upanishad : The whole world is the abode of Ishwara. When you realise this, the realisation will bring an attitude of renunciation towards attachment to worldly things. Therefore, the Veda says, *do not covet the wealth of others*.

In the present context, the first line of the sloka is relevant. In just *sixteen alphabets*, it reveals an eternal truth: *it automatically means that everything automatically becomes sacred. Nothing is outside the ambit of divinity and everything falls in its purview because ईशावास्य has no boundaries.*

This verse is also a quick and easy way to understand how the Sanatana tradition regards the physical geography of Bharatavarsha: as sacred.

There are hundreds of such verses in the Vedic and other sacred corpus but this is quite representative of the ideal of a sacred geography – we also have the Nadi Suktas in the Vedas… अम्बितमे देवितमे नदीतमे सरस्वती, etc where rivers are regarded as a mother nourishing her infant, as Devi, etc.

This ideal of a sacred geography becomes clearer when we contrast how other countries regard their geography. For example, Nazi Germany and Communist USSR saw their countries as the Fatherland. However, in common conception, which has held ground for the longest time, the term "Motherland" is probably the most familiar notion representing the physical geography of a people.

However, only Hindus regard Bharatavarsha as a *Punyabhoomi*, *Pavitrabhoomi, Karmabhoomi, Dharma-kshetra,* and so on. When we think about the meaning of these words, we find that they all have their roots in the same divine impulse and ideal embodied in ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं, etc. For countless centuries, Hindus have continued to take extraordinary pride in their geography, the most visible, everyday proof of which are the countless *Tirtha-Yatras* that go on on a daily basis. One can recall a verse attributed to an early medieval Sanskrit poet.

> Let me be born as a tree, shrub, plant, or worm or pebble, but let me be born in Bharatavarsha and nowhere else.

Hindus thus celebrate their land's greatness and sanctity in slokas, Puranas, Dharmashastras, etc. Think about why the Harvard Professor Diana Eck named her book, *India: A Sacred Geography.*

One of the greatest celebrations of this sacred geography is a grand passage in the Matsya Purana named *Mahasankalpa.* This portion even today, is recited during the Kanyadanam ritual in weddings, indicating an extraordinary civilisational and cultural continuity unparalleled anywhere in the world. The *Mahasankalpa* is in many ways, a mini-encyclopedia, an atlas and an almanac all rolled into one. In the present context, the geographical details and lists that it gives about India is relevant. It lists the names of mountains, forests, rivers, islands, groves, kingdoms, pilgrimage spots, and great cities and towns.

> अङ्ग वङ्ग कलिङ्ग कश्मीर कंभोज कामरूप केरल केकय कोसल मैथिल कुन्तल कुरङ्ग कुरवक सौवीर सौराष्ट्र मत्स्य मागध माळव मराळ सिंहल मलयाल चोल बङ्गाल पाञ्चाल साळव पुलीन्द्र कर्नाटक वराटक मराटक सिक्क सिन्ध पञ्चविका पावका पाम्ड्य द्रविड यवन शूरसेन घोर्जर कुक्कुर पराशर गान्धार विदर्भ बर्बर बरमा भोज बाह्लीक कोङ्कण टेङ्कण चीणा हूण दशार्णादि षट् पञ्चाशद्देश …

The aforementioned verse is a list of about 50 *Deshas* in the *Mahasankalpa.* Here, the word *Desha* overall, can be considered as indicative of the Indian geography of the period. A similar but slightly different list is available in a work titled *Sapta-panchashaddesha,* also listing 56 countries.

Apart from such works, at a very broad level, a popular method for identifying our geography in the ancient and up to late medieval period was using the Fivefold Classification:

1. Madhya Desha = Middle or Centre
2. Udeecya Desha – Roughly, North of north west of the Sindhu River
3. Prachya Desha = East
4. Dakshinapatha = South
5. Aparanta = the Western borders

Generally speaking, even the ancient and early medieval Chinese adopted the same classification scheme. They called these divisions as the *Five Indies*. When we think about it even today, we remain amazed once again, at our incredible civilisational continuity…in this case, manifesting in geography. This fivefold classification has largely been retained even today. One can verify this by reading all those dense government gazetteers written in our respective mother tongues.

Geography and History

This geographic-cultural preface in a way provides the backdrop because history and geography are inseparable. Geography dictates and directs and shapes history. And history alters maps. Which is why geography is also memory. And loss of physical geography is also loss of memory… civilisational, cultural, traditional and most importantly, it is loss of **narrative memory.**

In that sense, the forgotten Hindu History of Pakistan, in one line, can be couched as a loss of the narrative memory of Bharatavarsha because we have almost permanently lost that substantial geography, and therefore substantial narrative memory. This is a subject actually enough to fill an entire volume. But to be clear, when we use the word “Pakistan,” it also includes Afghanistan and Bangladesh. And when we say, “Hindu history,” it also includes Jain, Buddhist, Sikh and all other offshoots of Sanatana Dharma. In sketching out this forgotten history, we can divide it into a few broad categories for the sake of convenience.

1. Civilisational and cultural
2. Sacred or religious
3. People in the sense of eminent personalities that emerged from this region.
4. Commercial or business centres
5. Educational

This categorisation obviously has lots of overlaps and intersect at various points and strictly speaking, cannot be looked at in isolation.

The Magnitude of the Irretrievable Hindu Civilisational Loss in Pakistan

When we recall the famous quote that history is just an agglomeration of the biographies of eminent people, the statement needs to be quantified so that we can get a true picture of the *moral* and the *ethical* aspects of history. Indeed there is no better yardstick to judge the national character of a country than the kind of people it regards as heroes. Because he is relatively contemporary, how would we judge Germany if it continued to regard Adolf Hitler as a hero? On the contrary, the fact that he is still considered a national shame and a taboo also throws equal light on the national character of Germany.

When we apply the same principle for example, to Pakistan and innumerable mosques in the Bharatavarsha that has survived, who are celebrated as heroes in these realms? Muhammad bin Qasim, Mahmud of Ghazni, Muhammad Ghori, Timur, Babar, Aurangzeb and Tipu. The striking feature common to all these “heroes” is the fact that not only did they did *not* build anything of value but savagely annihilated painstaking works of lasting value, built over centuries.

Magnitude of the Loss

Therefore, when we study the forgotten Hindu history of Pakistan, what are the kind of people we encounter? A short list suffices. Maharshi Panini, Acharya Chanakya, Ashvaghosha, Nagasena (author of the famous *Milindapanha*), Vasubandhu, Jivaka (Gautama Buddha's physician), and Charaka. These were civilisation-builders and not merely eminent people who had attained excellence in their respective domains. It is beyond the scope of this series to elaborate their contributions to the Sanatana culture and civilisation.

But on a larger point, for centuries on end, the Afghanistan-Pakistan region —i.e., the Northwestern region—was a great centre of Sama Veda and Atharva Veda learning. So when we say Northwestern, we also ask: north west of what? The obvious answer: northwest of Bharatavarsha. Today, only one branch of the Atharva Veda remains in the remaining area of Bharatavarsha. All the other eight branches have vanished because they had been preserved in this region. Equally, the Jaimini branch of the Sama Veda was preserved in Sindh and Gujarat. According to some estimates, there were about *one thousand* branches of the Sama Veda – only *three* have survived today.

Indeed, for centuries, the Sindh and the Northwestern region had vibrant contact with Kashmir, which was looked upon as the land blessed by Saraswati herself. Kashmir's enduring fame as one of the greatest centres of Sanskrit is too well-known to be repeated. Fragments of the surviving literature and other artefacts from the original Sindh mention many poets, writers and scholars hailing from Kashmir. However, almost

no literary work composed in (the original) Sindh itself survives today. But from just what is available, we get a huge list of *five hundred-plus* scholars, poets, etc of the highest standard who lived and flourished in Sindh. Scores of Dharmashastras and other legal treatises were composed in this region but *we don't have any record of them whatsoever.*

Maharshi Panini didn't just write his magnificent grammar, the *Asthadhyayi*, overnight. He toiled patiently and diligently built upon a long and ancient *Parampara* or tradition. He also mentions a big list of geographical locations of ancient India. A measure of the perennial nature of his foundational work can be had in the countless praise that British researchers heaped upon him. For example, Alexander Cunningham's superb work on the ancient and medieval geography of India mentions in so many words that Panini was both inevitable and indispensable for any work on ancient India. Yet we have Romila Thapar and her gang which casually dismisses Panini with an arrogance that's truly incredible.

Maharshi Panini divides the geography of Bharatavarsha into two major categories: all places to the east of the Sindhu River and to the west of it. Needless, the names of the majority of places on this other side of the Sindhu are gone forever, replaced by unpronounceable names.

Lahore for example, was a great and renowned centre of Sanskrit learning even during the pre-independence period. One of the legendary Sanskrit scholars and a Jnanapith Awardee, Padmabhushan, Vidyavachaspati, Professor Satyavrat Sastri's antecedents are from Lahore.

It might sound unbelievable now, but even in the early years of independence, the Arya Samaj had made Lahore as one of its more powerful and active hubs.

Next, we can also briefly observe the region known as East Pakistan or Bangladesh. For several centuries, it was a great centre of Sanskrit learning and literature, which in turn was an extraordinary legacy of the Pala rule. Sridharadasa who wrote the immortal *Saduktikarnamrita,* Vidyakara who wrote the *Subhashitaratnakosha* hailed from here. From their works, we get an additional list of *three hundred*-plus poets, writers, scholars etc whom they've praised or cited. Of this huge number, all we now have are a handful of individual verses. *Not a single work has survived in full or even substantially.* This appalling destruction of the sublime and the beautiful, of knowledge itself, was the singlehanded work of Bhaktiyar Khalji. The eminent historian and life member of the Romila Thapar Club of Distory, D.N. Jha, has gone to extraordinary lengths to whitewash and rescue Bhaktiyar Khalji.

Small wonder that generations of Hindus have forgotten the Hindu history of Pakistan.

Even if we claim—as numerous Hindus do—that all these are ancient histories and we should "move on" and focus on the "present" and the "future," here is a fairly contemporary account. Of the fate of Kashmir. Until Article 370 was scrapped, this was the story of Kashmir: a no-holds-barred civilisational assault lasting for nearly a century. Remember that Kashmir was *not* part of the India that was lost in 1947 to Pakistan. The question that logically arises is this: **why did Hindus lose it?** The answer is the same…the same narrative that continues to play out on the streets of Delhi even as I write this: because the Muslim leadership of that period felt unsafe in a country where Hindus were majority.

Think about the Hindu temples in Kashmir over the last seventy-plus years. Where are these temples in Kashmir today? What about the fate of

those temples that were left unmolested? Why aren't new temples getting built there? Why and *how* does the sacred Shankaracharya Hill acquire an abomination called Takht-e-Suleiman? The underlying point in all such questions is really simple: if Hindus cannot—or are not allowed to—perform something as fundamental as *Puja*, they're destroyed in ways our imagination cannot even fathom.

Pakistan is only as recent as 70 years, less than a drop in the ocean of time. And the memory of its Hindu past is almost completely erased.

The Forgotten Hindu History of Pakistan is Just a Pause

One of the first things that struck me when I was researching the forgotten Hindu history of Pakistan is this: beginning with the second century up to the eighth century CE, *we have almost no primary sources* to reconstruct the Hindu history of this region with any accuracy. That's *six hundred years* of cruel, tragic silence. The inference is rather straightforward: throughout these six centuries, the Hindus in that region were involved first in a series of defensive battles against a determined and relentless enemy that respected no rules, had no scruples, and was fuelled by an unquenchable thirst for plunder which had both the sanction and inspiration of his imperialistic desert cult clothed in the garb of religion. Once the defences broke down as they're bound to in all such cases, it became a matter of mere survival. And once the Hindus had reached that stage, we get a much clearer picture of the history of the region: by the seventh or eighth century CE, northwestern India had stopped producing the best of the Sanatana genius. No more Paninis or Kautilyas would flourish there.

After the eighth century CE, the maximum primary sources of the history of this region which are still available, are written by Muslim chroniclers of that period. We all know how *those* histories read. Vincent Smith provides a glimpse into the mindset of these medieval Muslim chroniclers with naked contempt.

> [Qutub-ud-din Aibak] was a typical specimen of the ferocious Central Asian warriors of the time, merciless and fanatical. His valour and profuse liberality to his comrades endeared him to the bloodthirsty historian of his age, who praises him as having been a ' beneficent and victorious monarch. …His gifts were bestowed by hundreds of thousands, and his slaughters likewise were by hundreds of thousands. All the leaders in the Muslim conquest of Hindostan similarly rejoice in committing wholesale massacres of Hindu idolaters, armed or unarmed.

Despite these enormous losses, we're stunned at the extraordinary resilience of the Sanatana spirit when we read the relatively recent history of this region: first the Marathas and later Maharaja Ranjit Singh, reconquered extensive territories including Peshawar and parts of Afghanistan after more than *six hundred years*—that is, in the mid-to-late 19th century CE.

We can look at this from another perspective provided by the ever-reliable historian and scholar, Sita Ram Goel.

> Today, there are no Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, temples and monuments or Zoroastrian Fire Temples in the Central Asian Republics of the USSR and Sinkiang in China, in Makran, Seistan, and the entire Afghanistan which was honeycombed with temples before the advent of Islam. What new temples were built during the Sikh and British rule in today's Pakistan and Bangladesh are fast vanishing. The same is happening in Kashmir in "independent" India.

This then, is the other way to understand the different facets of the forgotten Hindu history of Pakistan. In our present age of our willing subjection to digital distraction, there are two quick methods to do this:

1. To notice the state of Hindu temples, and other monuments in Pakistan inspired by the fount of Sanatana Dharma. Their histories are available at least in an outline form. These accounts are truly eye-opening to say the least.

2. To read the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites in this region. When we read this list, we immediately notice the fact that most of them are located precisely in the areas where the Islamic conquest of Bharatavarsha occurred first. It is also noteworthy that Afghanistan has *only two* world heritage sites: the badly battered Bamiyan Buddhas being the *only* Santana-inspired heritage site.

And then, when we read the history of something as recent as the freedom struggle, it is common to see names like Sindh, Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Kohat etc in the same way that we today take the names of Bangalore, Mumbai, Bhopal, Delhi, Chandigarh, Chennai, etc. All these cities and towns now in Pakistan were also great centres of our freedom struggle against the British. For example, Lala Lajpat Rai, Rajguru, Bhagat Singh, and Sukhdev…all died in Lahore. The number of nationalist publications—newspapers, magazines, etc published from regions now in Pakistan is also significant. In those days, it was considered prestigious if a business house had branches in *both* Bombay and Karachi to which there was direct and unfettered sea access. Today, Karachi is in enemy territory. We can cite hundreds of such examples but the important point to remember is this: *Islamabad did not exist before 1960*. What does *that* tell us about the forgotten Hindu history of Pakistan?

Finally, there is a common sense reason and *urgency* to learn and keep the forgotten Hindu history of Pakistan in our active memory. It is understandable that Pakistan doesn't teach the history of its Hindu past: it is due to the founding ideology and its state religion which treats the savage erasure of its Hindu past as a victory over a dark faith. However, it is both a civilisational necessity and imperative for what remains of Bharatavarsha to teach and remember always, the Hindu history of Pakistan.

Even in this case, the educational system of Pakistan itself shows us the way. There is an interesting academic report published in 2008-9 in Pakistan about the state of textbooks in Pakistan written by Pakistani academics. That report has an interesting data point about how… *Chemistry* is taught to children…Chemistry. Not history. Pakistani children are taught about the composition of Water in the following way: "Two atoms of Hydrogen and One atom of Oxygen come together, and by the grace of Allah, water is formed."

Unless we learn and remember this forgotten Hindu history of Pakistan, our kids, here, in India, sometime in the future, will have textbooks written like this.

Postscript: This author wishes to express his heartfelt gratitude to Shatavadhani Dr. Ganesh for providing great insights and guidance into the historical and cultural aspects of the Paninian, Mauryan and Kushana period.

* * *

About the Author

Sandeep Balakrishna is a writer and author of Indian history, Hindu civilisation and culture for about two decades. He writes in both English and Kannada. Sandeep is also a former Information Technology professional with a long and successful career at corporations such as Honeywell and Cisco.

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Sandeep is the founder and editor of *The Dharma Dispatch,* an online journal dedicated to Indian civilisation, culture and history. He is a contributing editor of the *Prekshaa Journal*, a niche online magazine focused on Indian culture and philosophy.

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